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ABSTRACT

The papers selected for this report of a conference on foreign language teaching with a view to "internationalizing the future" cover a wide range of topics and levels of study, including teaching Latin, using contemporary popular music in the curriculum, negotiating oral tasks, incorporating higher-order thinking skills into the curriculum, conversation courses, creative writing, and learning styles. Papers and authors are as follows: "'O Tempora! O Mores!' Teaching Cicero in High Schools Today" (Jeffrey L. Buller); "The New French Popular Music in the Foreign Language Classroom: Comprehension, Culture, Americanization" (Andre J. M. Prevos); "Promoting Communicative Competence through Task-Based Speech Activity" (Frank B. Brooks and Kari A. Niendorf); "Incorporating Higher-Order Thinking Skills in the Foreign Language Curriculum" (Audrey L. Heining-Boynton and David B. Heining-Boynton); "The Advanced Conversation Course" (Barbara Gonzalez Pino and Frank Pino, Jr.); "Creative Writing in the Secondary Foreign Language Class: A Literary Magazine" (Richard A. Goodwyn); and "Learning Styles and the At-Risk Foreign Language Student" (Mary B. McGehee and Jeanne Jendrzejewski). Contains 151 references. (LB)

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SCOLT

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE TEACHING

# DIMENSION: LANGUAGE '92 - '93

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES: INTERNATIONALIZING THE FUTURE

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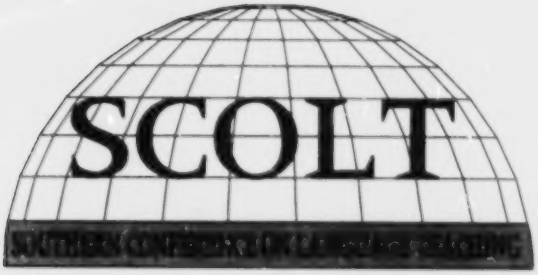


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REPORT OF THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE
ON LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Valdosta State College
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The procedures through which articles are reviewed and accepted for publication in the proceedings volume of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) actually begin with the submission of a proposal, including an abstract, to present a session at a SCOLT Annual Meeting. Once the proposal is received, it is read by members of the Program Committee.

Once a session proposal has been accepted, the presenter(s) is (are) contacted by the Editor and invited to submit an article for publication in *Dimension*, the annual volume of conference proceedings. Upon notification of interest, copies of the publication guidelines are sent to the presenter(s). Upon receipt of four copies of the manuscript, the articles submitted are then sent, with the title page containing the authors' names and affiliations removed, to the nationally prominent SCOLT Editorial Board, and each article is read by at least three of these specialists. Normally, articles are sent to reviewers who have expertise in the area treated by the article. The reviewers are asked to make one of three recommendations: (1) publish as is, (2) publish after rewriting, or (3) do not publish.

Once these recommendations are received by the Editor, s/he reads each article and makes the final decision whether or not to publish it. As a result of these procedures, at least three (3) individuals decide whether or not to include the oral presentation in the annual meeting, and then a different four (4) people read and approve the article before it is selected to appear in *Dimension*.

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# INTRODUCTION

The 1993 SCOLT Annual Conference presented a challenge to the organization. We had no annual conference in 1992 since we had moved our traditional meeting date from October to February. We were uncertain of just what attendance might be. We moved the traditional meeting date to avoid the numerous conflicts with the annual meetings of local and state foreign language organizations as well as to afford teachers that needed "shot in the arm" at a period in the school year when enthusiasm and interest appear to have waned.

We marched on Atlanta, rallying around our theme banner, "Internationalizing the Future," intent on making our joint meeting with the Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG) a success. Could we come close to the record numbers that were at our 1991 October meeting in North Carolina? Yes! And we appeared in large numbers: the attendance at the February 1993 meeting was approximately 1050! There was an atmosphere of great enthusiasm for the three days of the conference, evidenced by the attendance at the preconference workshops, at the concurrent sessions, as well as at the business and social functions that appeared throughout the three days.

The articles selected to appear in *Dimension '92-'93* reflect the caliber of the presentations given at the Atlanta conference and illustrate the wide range of topics and levels of study that were addressed. Each article deals with different language skills as well as with different facets of foreign language teaching: reading, writing, listening, speaking, culture, learning strategies, higher-order thinking skills, at-risk learners. Indeed, these seven articles all aim toward the future, toward internationalizing our students' knowledge of the world by making cultures different from ours accessible to them. But these cultures, as reflected in the different languages that we teach, become accessible to our students primarily through us and through our use of effective teaching strategies and our relatively limited knowledge of just how language is acquired. The authors in this volume offers their insights and suggestions to help us all internationalize the future.

It is indeed exciting to have an article on teaching Latin. Jeffrey L. Buller's article, "*O Tempora! O Mores!* Teaching Cicero in High Schools Today," is a substantive look at Cicero as the author of historical and social

documents. Cicero has long been a part of the traditional Latin curriculum in American schools, and some of today's students consider his works dated. Major questions arise: Should Cicero still play a role in the Latin curriculum? Why do his works deserve to be studied? How should his works be studied? In this article, Buller provides answers to these questions and goes further by addressing the use of Cicero's works in a more content-based approach to teaching.

André J. M. Prévos offers us a rationale for including contemporary popular music into the foreign-language curriculum. His article, "The New French Popular Music in the Foreign Language Classroom: Comprehension, Culture, Americanization," although talking specifically about French music, has clear implications for the use of this music in other language classrooms. The article offers us an up-to-date image of French popular music, with examples coming from pop, rock, alternative music, and rap, and Prévos suggests how we might expand the uses of this type of authentic material. Prévos specifically addresses the concept of "learner as ethnographer," i.e., increasing our understanding of the language as well as the society of other countries, "incorporating more cultural elements in the teaching of foreign languages and [...] making sure that these cultural elements are truly relevant to the everyday life of the inhabitants of the foreign country whose language is being learned."

Frank B. Brooks and Kari A. Niendorf, in "Promoting Communicative Competence Through Task-Based Speech Activity," give us insight into how language learners negotiate meaning in oral exchanges through the use of jigsaw tasks. We foreign language teachers are clearly aware of the fact that discourse and spoken language have evolved into crucial and integral components of the foreign language classroom. Brooks and Niendorf first discuss the essence of communicative competence and the negotiation of meaning, then explore the theoretical foundations for and research findings in task-based approaches to language teaching and learning.

In "Incorporating Higher-Order Thinking Skills in the Foreign Language Curriculum," Audrey L. Heining-Boynton and David B. Heining-Boynton give us a brief history and several working definitions of higher-order thinking skills. They then share a process for incorporating higher-order thinking into the foreign language curricula for kindergarten through college/university by providing representative sample activities that reflect different stages in Bloom's taxonomy.

Conversation classes are always popular with foreign language students. After all, being able to speak the language well is one of the primary reasons given for studying any $L_2$. Barbara González Pino and Frank Pino, Jr. tackle "The Advanced Conversation Course," which often serves as a transition point for students who are acquiring the language as they begin to try to move from Intermediate-level proficiency to Advanced. The authors discuss the structure and content of their own classes in which their particular approach has been tested. They also address how the students' progress in oral proficiency can be evaluated as it is revealed on pre- and post-tests.

Richard A. Goodwyn gives us the history of the literary foreign language magazine created by students at Marietta (GA) High School in his article, "Creative Writing in the Secondary Foreign Language Class: A Literary Magazine." Goodwyn addresses several different concerns that teachers encounter in coordinating such a magazine: teacher involvement, problems, and projections. He also includes creative writing samples in French, Latin, and Spanish, produced by a variety of students.

Finally, Mary B. McGehee and Jeanne Jendrzejewski, in their article "Learning Styles and the At-Risk Student," address the need for early recognition of at-risk students in the foreign language class. Research shows that the at-risk student is not necessarily of low ability; s/he may, however, have special needs that are not being met. The authors suggest that an increase or decrease in structure in the classroom, a shift in teaching or homework to match the subtle differences in the students' learning style, strategies to focus learning, among other elements, may make the vital difference for certain students. Learning to match teaching and learning styles makes foreign language teaching and learning more profitable for the students and more enjoyable for all.

## Acknowledgements

The Southern Conference on Language Teaching is most appreciative of the ongoing support and assistance of Valdosta State College and of the tireless work of Lee Bradley in the preparation of the final copy of the manuscript for *Dimension '92-'93*. Such continuing support and assistance underline the important role that foreign languages clearly play in education today.

I would like to recognize the outstanding efforts of the members of the Editorial Board for the promptness and thoroughness with which they read, evaluated, and offered invaluable suggestions to the authors of those manuscripts accepted for publication. Since I can rely on the expertise of nationally-recognized scholars in evaluating the quality and relevance of manuscripts submitted, my job is made significantly easier.

Robert M. Terry
Editor
Conference Chairman, 1992-93

# 1

# *O Tempora! O Mores!* Teaching Cicero in High Schools Today

**Jeffrey L. Buller**
**Georgia Southern University**

Change comes to all things...even to the Latin class. For many years the "standard Latin curriculum"--a four-year program that treated grammar, Caesar, Cicero, and Vergil each in turn--was universal and all but inflexible in American high schools. Today, however, there are schools where Latin is begun at the junior high level or even earlier, making it necessary to expand the pre-college Latin program into a five-, six-, or seven-year course of study. Other school systems have faced severe budget reductions and have either eliminated or consolidated all of their Latin courses beyond the first year. In addition, teachers today are often modifying their own programs because they object to Caesar's militarism or Vergil's difficulty or simply because they wish to take a longer time introducing grammar. For all of these reasons, authors such as Catullus, Horace, and Ovid are receiving far more attention today than they ever did under the old curriculum. In fact, there is so much variety in current high school Latin programs that a contemporary Cato may well echo Cicero's cry from the *First Oration*

*Against Catiline* and exclaim "*O Tempora! O Mores!,*" a phrase translated and explained in a leading textbook as "Oh, the times! Oh, the morals!"--accusative of exclamation. A modern speaker might say, "What is the world coming to?" (Jenney, Scudder, and Coffin, 71).

At the very least one may be forgiven for wondering what the Latin world is coming to. And the answer to this question may be summarized with a single phrase: much greater diversity than it has ever known before. To the extent that teachers are now able to tailor their Latin programs more precisely to the needs, interests, and abilities of their students, this expanded flexibility is all to the good. To the extent that students who continue to study Latin in college will now have a greater diversity of experience and training, college teachers will find these recent changes to be a mixed blessing:

- some students will be excellently prepared, others less so;
- it will not be possible to assume that everyone in the class is familiar with a standard canon of texts;
- whole areas of ancillary knowledge (scansion, mythology, Roman history, and the like) may either have been the focal point of a student's introductory course or all but ignored.

These challenges may be formidable but they are not insurmountable. Teachers of modern foreign languages have been dealing with them successfully for many years.

Even the most fervent admirer of the "standard Latin curriculum" must admit, however, that there is still one author whose works are read in almost all high school Latin programs: Cicero. Cicero's orations--especially the *Catilinarians*, the speech *On the Manilian Law*, and the *Pro Archia*--are required reading for most high school Latin students regardless of the textbook series, pedagogical approach, or pace of instruction adopted by their teachers. Moreover, with the Educational Testing Service's introduction of a new Advanced Placement exam in Catullus and Cicero (the first time that any Latin prose author has been included on such an exam), it may be said that Cicero is now more important to high school Latin than ever. Why is this so? How should Latin teachers organize the course or unit on Cicero so as to provide the greatest benefit to their students?

## How Approaches to Teaching Cicero Have Changed Over the Last Century

To answer these questions, it must be recognized that, while interest in Cicero has remained constant over the years, the reasons why people have read his works have changed dramatically. As but one example, the *Catilinarians* are often studied today from a perspective that may have surprised teachers a hundred years ago: Cicero's speeches, it is now commonly said, are compelling denunciations of tyranny and corruption. Though they do illustrate Cicero's pomposity and self-absorption at their worst, they also are masterpieces written with complete conviction, at the same time spontaneous and highly crafted. In other words, most teachers today present the *Catilinarians* as cautionary tales against petty dictators and as historical documents drawn from one of the most interesting periods in Roman history. It seems so obvious an approach that it is surprising to think that anyone could ever have viewed the *Catilinarians* differently. And yet, people did. For more than fifteen hundred years, from the time of Saint Augustine until the early years of the present century, Cicero was not read primarily or even necessarily for his political and historical insight. What caused Cicero to become a part of the "standard Latin curriculum" in the first place was his philosophy, his achievement and, most of all, his sense of style.

In 1903, the opening paragraph of a high school edition of Cicero listed the following as the central reason for studying this author:

> In the long list of illustrious citizens of republican Rome, the name of Marcus Tullius Cicero holds a place second only to that of Julius Caesar. Unaided by the accidents of birth, wealth, or influence, by mere force of natural talent and unceasing industry, he made himself, in the age of greatest men, a power in the Roman state, an orator with but one superior in history, and the greatest master of the Latin language. The most modern of the ancients, he is still a living influence in thought and speech (von Minckwitz, 1).

The first thing that Latin teachers today are likely to notice about this statement is how free it is of the modern world's uneasiness toward

Caesar and his place in Roman history. Without any conscious sense of irony, the author cites Cicero, that great opponent of imperial tyranny, as second in importance only to Julius Caesar, the embodiment of the very sort of dictatorship that Cicero opposed. Both are regarded as equivalent role models with complete indifference to the wide gulf that separated their values and their political sympathies.

The second thing that one notices about this passage is its strange emphasis upon Cicero's political rise "by mere force of natural talent and unceasing industry...unaided by the accidents of birth, wealth, or influence." Cicero ends up sounding like Mark the Match Boy or Ben the Luggage Boy, characters from Horatio Alger's *Luck and Pluck Series*. As a matter of fact, this is not really a coincidence after all: Alger, who had authored the childhood reading of most students who would be using this text, had died only four years before it was issued. Cicero's industry, his spectacular achievement despite his humble origins, and his willingness to place the interests of the state above his own are precisely what made him seem "the most modern of the ancients" to students living in the early years of the twentieth century.

The third peculiarity that one is likely to notice about this preface may well be the most important: the author assumes that it is in Cicero's rhetoric and style, rather than in his content, that "he is still a living influence" to the modern world. This is a theme that appears repeatedly throughout the high school texts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1] The underlying argument of these textbooks may be summarized as follows: 1) The preservation of liberty depends upon one's ability to persuade others to adopt the correct course of action. 2) Cicero, whose oratorical works are models of rhetorical persuasion, is the one ancient figure whose style is most to be imitated. 3) Thus, adopting a "Ciceronian style" not only makes one a better citizen but also allows one to participate more fully in those activities that preserve political independence and the republican tradition.

All of this sounds completely foreign to modern ears. A reader today is not likely to look for a defense of liberty in *how* Cicero says things but in *what* Cicero says. So does the traditional approach to Cicero have any relevance at all to the modern Latin teacher? More to the point, does it have anything to say about how Cicero *should* be taught in Latin classrooms today?

## Updating the Traditional Approach to Cicero for High Schools Today

Well, oddly enough, it does. While contemporary Latin teachers would be hesitant to describe themselves as introducing "the adolescent mind to the polished diction and the fervid oratory of Cicero," as did one early textbook (Bishop, King and Helm, 6), the basic assumptions of these works remain sound. The teachers who wrote those textbooks of fifty to one hundred years ago wanted more than anything for their students to examine Cicero's works critically and to see whether they were still worthy of imitation. They wanted their students to trace the logic that Cicero used in making his arguments and to adopt it as a model in their own writing and speech. Most importantly of all, they wanted their students to improve their own expository style by studying the works of a master stylist.

Certainly these are still worthy goals. The objective itself has not changed but the language used to describe it has. It may seem out of date, for instance, to discuss "civic virtues" in the contemporary high school but nearly everyone is concerned with "community values." The term "oratory" may seem terribly old-fashioned but developing "oral communication skills" is the goal of nearly every school system and accrediting agency. Few secondary schools offer courses in "logic" or even "philosophy" any more, but teachers everywhere are concerned with assessing the "critical thinking skills" of their students.

In other words (literally "in other words"), the language used over the past century in framing educational goals has changed even more substantially than have the educational goals themselves. It is possible, therefore, for teachers to update the traditional approach to Cicero merely by adopting terms that make this approach more accessible to students, parents, and (dare one say!) administrators today.

***Exploration of Values:*** A frequently repeated criticism of current education in the public schools is that it is "lacking in values." Students, one hears repeatedly, are able to graduate from high school, or even from college, without having addressed any of the great moral issues that have always challenged humanity. Nevertheless, the difficulty of teaching values in the public schools has always been in deciding *whose* values are going to be taught. Schools today include individuals from

a wide variety of creeds and cultures who resist the assumption that a single set of values must be embraced by all students. Moreover, it may well be the case that values are just as much a part of public education today as they were forty or fifty years ago. It is merely that the social values now being taught--tolerance, cooperation, openness, and the like--do not go far enough toward fulfilling the specific moral agenda of certain critics. Whatever the truth of this may be, it should be recognized that Cicero's texts are excellent resources for introducing the discussion of values into the classroom. Not only did Cicero write on such subjects as civic duties (*De Officiis*), virtue (Book V of the *Tusculan Disputations*), and the proper conduct of the state (*De Re Publica*), he also adopted a discernible ethical stance in many of his speeches. For this reason, it is possible for students to read a Ciceronian oration and then address, in their essays or in oral presentations, such issues as

- whether capital punishment is ever justified and, if so, under what conditions (the *Fourth Oration Against Catiline*)
- whether it is ever necessary or advisable to confer absolute power upon a single individual (*On the Manilian Law*)
- whether literature and the arts are elitist luxuries or embodiments of more important values for society (*Pro Archia*)
- the nature of political corruption (*Ad Verrem*)
- and the dangers of tyranny (the *Philippics*).

By choosing to focus on the values presented in Cicero's speeches, teachers make it clear to their students that the same issues debated by the Romans at the end of the Republic are still being debated today. That alone is a useful lesson: there are some questions that will never be answered to everyone's satisfaction and some problems that will never be solved. Cicero's texts can help teach this lesson. Even beyond this, however, by considering the issues that Cicero raises and the solutions that he proposes, students will be compelled to consider their own values and to defend them (to themselves, if to no one else). Parents and administrators who want values to be discussed in the classroom and yet oppose the inculcation of a single creed or point of view will find that the course in Cicero provides a useful compromise.

***Critical Thinking Skills:*** A second possible variation of the traditional approach would be for Latin teachers to treat the orations of Cicero primarily as exercises in argumentation. How does Cicero build a case in each of his speeches and is he successful in doing so? What sort of evidence does he introduce? Where there is not a great deal of evidence in support of his argument (as is the case, for example, in *Pro Archia*), how does Cicero convey his point of view? How might the case be presented differently if it were introduced into a court of law today? How would the students, if they were advising one of Cicero's opponents, plead the other side of the case?

By asking questions of this sort, teachers make it clear that the speeches of Cicero may be analyzed as examples of how arguments should (and, at times, should not) be made. For instance, in the *Fourth Oration Against Catiline*, Cicero uses this approach in pleading that the conspirators must be shown no mercy:

> *Mihi vero importunus ac ferreus qui non dolore et cruciatu nocentis suum dolorem cruciatumque lenierit. Sic nos in hos hominibus qui nos, qui coniuges, qui liberos nostros trucidare voluerunt, qui singulas unius cuiusque nostrum domos et hoc universum rei publicae domicilium delere conati sunt, qui id egerunt ut gentem Allobrogum in vestigiis huius urbis atque in cinere deflagrati imperi conlocarent, si vehementissimi fuerimus, misericordes habebimur; sin remissiores esse voluerimus, summae nobis crudelitatis in patriae civiumque pernicie fama subeunda est.*
>
> To my mind, at least, a man would seem to be senseless or even hard-hearted if he did not relieve his own suffering by inflicting suffering upon the one causing him misery. That's how we ought to feel towards these men: they wanted to massacre us, our wives, and our children; they tried to raze the homes of every single one of us and, indeed, to destroy our entire country; they tried to settle a foreign tribe on the ashes of our city and of our empire. Only if we're severe to men like this, shall we be considered merciful. But if we choose to show clemency to these criminals, then others shall

> consider us horribly cruel because we were utterly indifferent to the destruction of our state and of our fellow citizens (*Fourth Oration Against Catiline* 6.12).

After reading this passage, students should be asked: How does Cicero "turn the tables" on his opposition in this speech, arguing that mercy would not really be merciful and that kindness would not be kind? Are all of Cicero's accusations against the conspirators fair and true? [**HINT:** Whom did the conspirators really seek to kill? Is this the same as Cicero's claim that Catiline sought "to destroy our entire country" (*universum rei publicae domicilium delere*)?] How would Cicero's case have been weakened if this overstatement had not been made? Finally, as a way of tying the "critical thinking" approach to the "exploration of values" approach mentioned earlier, teachers might consider asking their students: How would an advocate of capital punishment make a similar argument today? What answer might one make to that argument and what answer might Cicero's opponents, including Julius Caesar, have made to his *Fourth Oration Against Catiline*?

A similar sort of exercise might be constructed around an interesting argument that Cicero makes in his *Second Philippic* against Marc Antony. In this speech Cicero responds to an accusation made against him that, since he had wanted Julius Caesar to be killed, he must share in the guilt of those who had assassinated Caesar. Cicero's reply to this charge is merely to say that, if it is a crime to have wanted Caesar to die, then it must also be a crime to have rejoiced in his murder. In that case, nearly all of the Romans are criminals since "every decent person" was delighted to learn that this tyrant had been killed.

Teachers may wish to present their students with this passage and then to ask them: Does Cicero's argument really prove his point? Is it the same thing to approve of an action once it has been done and to desire it before it has occurred? Are Cicero's facts correct? Did "every decent person" rejoice at the news of Caesar's death? And, even if they did, does the universality of guilt lessen the severity of the guilt itself? Is there a better way for Cicero to have defended himself against this charge?

***Expository Style:*** Perhaps the most common way in which teachers have traditionally approached Cicero has been to analyze the rhetoric

and style of his prose. To be sure, it is almost impossible to exaggerate Cicero's importance as a model for what the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries regarded as eloquence in prose style. For instance, one signature of Cicero's style was his ability to achieve the perfect balance between the dryness and simplicity of the "Attic style" (represented in Latin by Caesar's *Gallic Wars*) and the fullness and complexity of the "Asiatic style" (which, at its worst, degenerated into bombast and hollow rhetorical effects).

Cicero frequently constructs long and complicated sentences (too long and too complicated, many students would say) out of several carefully balanced and, in themselves, fairly simple parts. Here, for instance, is an example from the eleventh section of the speech *On the Manilian Law*. In it, Cicero is providing a catalogue of Pompey's military successes:

> *Testis est Italia quam ille ipse victor L. Sulla huius virtute et subsidio confessus est liberatam; testis Sicilia quam multis undique cinctam periculis non terrore belli sed consili celeritate explicavit; testis Africa quae magnis oppressa hostium copiis eorum ipsorum sanguine redundavit; testis Gallia per quam legionibus nostris iter in Hispaniam Gallorum internecione patefactum est; testis Hispania quae saepissime plurimos hostes ab hoc superatos prostratosque conspexit; testis iterum et saepius Italia quae, cum servili bello taetro periculosoque premeretur, ab hoc auxilium absente expetivit, quod bellum exspectatione eius attenuatum atque imminutum est, adventu sublatum ac sepultum; testes nunc vero iam omnes orae atque terrae gentes ac nationes, maria denique omnia cum universa tum in singulis oris omnes sinus atque portus.*
>
> [In support of all I have said,] Italy is a witness, a land which Lucius Sulla himself admitted to have been saved by the valor and skill of this man; Sicily is a witness, a land which, though surrounded by many dangers, Pompey freed not by the threat of war but by the speed of his strategy; Africa is a witness, a land which, though Pompey found it threatened by enemies on all sides,

> soon overflowed with their blood; Gaul is a witness, a land through which the road to Spain was cleared for our troops when the Gauls were annihilated; Spain is a witness, a land which again and again has seen its enemies defeated and humiliated by this man; Italy is a witness, a land which was worn out by the treachery of a slave rebellion and repeatedly sought Pompey's help, though he was far from home (they started to write the treaty as soon as they heard of his approach and signed it at the very moment of his arrival); now witness, too, are all the shores, all the nations, all the peoples, in short, all the seas, all the bays, and all the harbors in the world (*On the Manilian Law*, 11).

In Latin, this is but a single sentence! The vocabulary and grammar of each individual clause, however, are simplicity itself. Hardly a word or a structure appears that is not encountered at the earliest levels of an introductory Latin course. Yet the force of the sentence is derived from its rhythm and from the complexity that Cicero achieves as he combines those simple units into an impressive period of considerable length. Pompey's achievements are dinned into the ears of the audience through a repetition of clause after clause with the same essential structure, the same essential length, and the same essential cadence.

Moreover, despite the simplicity of Cicero's words, the orator manages to incorporate a number of poetic devices including chiasmus (*terrore belli sed consili celeritate)*, alliteration (the repetition of *testis*), and hendiadys (*virtute et subsidio*, *attenuatum atque imminutum*). The combined effect gives the passage itself great charm and, at the same time, makes Pompey seem to be a man of action everywhere in the world, certainly well qualified to be entrusted with this new command.

Once students have begun to recognize how frequently Cicero uses this technique of constructing intricate passages out of simple parts, they will begin to notice many other examples of it in his speeches, philosophical works and letters. For example, teachers may wish to direct their students' attention to such passages as the sixth section of the *First Oration Against Catiline*, the fourth section of the *Second Oration Against Catiline*, and section 52 of the fourth published speech against Verres (*In C. Verrem Actio Secunda* 4.52). In each of these

examples, there are long "Ciceronian" structures that may be broken down into a series of brief examples that make the evidence appear to be weighty, extensive and, ultimately, irrefutable.

At other times--for instance section 63 of the fifth published speech against Verres (*In C. Verrem Actio Secunda* 5.63) or the opening passages of the *First Oration Against Catiline*--similar groups of short phrases or rhetorical questions are welded into longer clauses so as to achieve an emotional rather than a rhetorical effect. With each successive phrase, Cicero makes the guilt of the accused seem more outrageous, the shock of all decent citizens seem more intense, and the defense of the opposition seem more futile.

Analyzing the style of Cicero in this way helps students to learn that the intricate sentence structure of a Ciceronian oration serves a specific purpose. The style of the *Catilinarians* is more complex than, for instance, the style of the *Gallic Wars*, not because Cicero was unable to construct Caesar's short, clear, and simple sentences, but because a weightier and more emotional style was better suited to the requisite mood or the author's rhetorical purpose.

It is especially important for students to perform this type of stylistic analysis nowadays because the "grand" style of rhetoric is so rarely encountered in contemporary prose. Most modern authors--and most modern teachers of composition--aim at a more concise, almost journalistic style of expository writing. In the words of Strunk and White, "Rich, ornate prose is hard to digest, generally unwholesome, and sometimes nauseating" (72). This judgment does not, however, mean that the "Ciceronian" style of writing was never popular in English or that students will never encounter it. As but one example, teachers may wish to share with their students the intentionally Latinate (read "Ciceronian") peroration from Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

> The various causes and progressive effects [of Rome's fall] are connected with many of the events most interesting in human annals: the artful policy of the Caesars, who long maintained the name and image of a free republic; the disorders of military despotism; the rise, establishment, and sects of Christianity; the foundation of Constantinople; the division of the monarchy; the invasion and settlements of the barbarians in Germany

> and Scythia; the institutions of civil law; the character and religion of Mohammed; the temporal sovereignty of the popes; the restoration and decay of the Western empire of Charlemagne; the crusades of the Latins in the East; the conquests of the Saracens and Turks; the ruin of the Greek empire; the state and revolutions of Rome in the middle ages" (Hadas, 304).

Like so many passages of Cicero, this single, long sentence is composed of a large number of relatively simple sections. In each of the sections, neither the grammar nor the vocabulary is particularly remarkable. None of the words is obscure and, although this cannot be said for all of the *Decline and Fall*, most of the phrasing would be perfectly appropriate in an ordinary conversation. Despite this apparent simplicity, however, the accumulated effect of these short, rhythmic phrases proves to be one of great seriousness and weight, crushing any alternative view by the abundance of the examples and by their stirring emotional power.

Why, the teacher might ask the students, did Gibbon choose to imitate Cicero in this passage? Is style merely an affectation in this case or does it have a genuine rhetorical effect? Why would the short "sentence bursts" of Caesar or the "telegraphic" style of Tacitus not have been appropriate here? Are there any types of writing in which Cicero would be a suitable model today? Why should one avoid, in most cases, this intricate sort of writing in expository prose?

Other examples of the Ciceronian style in English may be found in the novels of Edward Bulwer-Lytton (including *The Last Days of Pompeii*), the works of Henry James, and the essays of Thomas Carlyle. One useful exercise, therefore, would be for the teacher to distribute a number of passages by these authors to a class that has read several speeches by Cicero. The students would then be asked to rank the passages from *most* to *least* Ciceronian. What is it about the authors' choice of vocabulary that leads the students to their conclusions? What does the class notice about the rhythm of the clauses or the way in which each sentence builds to its climax? What is the author's *purpose* in each case: to provide information, to stir the reader's emotions or to win assent? And what examples from Cicero's own speeches can the students cite in order to support their views of what constitutes a "Ciceronian style?"

By asking questions such as these, the teacher helps the class to achieve three important goals. To begin with, the exercise forces the class to review all that it has learned about Cicero's rhetorical technique and to provide specific evidence in support of its observations. Second, it makes it clear to the students that the approaches to stylistic criticism that they have learned in their analysis of Cicero's texts may be applied to other authors as well, in other words that it has value beyond the confines of the Latin classroom. Finally, since the literary style and rhetorical devices encountered in Cicero's speeches are not limited to oratory, the students may then be encouraged to locate other examples of these devices in their reading for other courses.

## Alternative Approaches to Cicero

The three approaches that have been considered thus far--focusing upon values, reasoning, and style--remain at the center of what has long been the traditional approach to Cicero. Whether the works of this author were read for their rhetoric or for their logic, it was largely the *form* of the works that interested teachers rather than their *content*. To a great degree, as we have seen, this emphasis is the result of history: Cicero had entered the literary canon less because of his belief in the Roman republic than because he was useful as a model for how a particular point of view (*any* particular point of view) might be presented persuasively and eloquently to a large audience.

Nowadays, however, teachers may wish to broaden this traditional "style-based" approach by combining it with more "content-based" material. How, in other words, do Cicero's speeches function as historical documents? What do they tell us about the society in which he lived, about how his system of government worked, and about that critical period in Roman history that Sir Ronald Syme called "the Roman revolution?" And why is this information still important today? How, in the end, can Cicero's speeches and letters be read so as to provide cultural insight into the age in which the orator lived?

To answer these questions, there are a number of perspectives that the teacher might take.

***Cicero as an Individual:*** Cicero, it need hardly be said, spoke a great deal about his own life even in the midst of focusing upon other issues. As a result, it is possible for the Latin class to treat Cicero's works as

"source materials" for a biography of the orator, providing insight into the character, habits, and motivations of this fascinating individual. What was it about Cicero that led him to embark upon his political career and to advocate policies that so often met with opposition, even with danger to himself? Was Cicero motivated primarily by his sense of what is right and wrong, his thirst for power, his desire for wealth and fame, the ideals instilled into him while he was young, or some combination of all of these factors? And how can a reader determine the motives of an author especially when that author, because of vanity or self-deception, conceals his true motivation? By asking questions such as these, the teacher will encourage the students to probe a text more deeply, to see beyond its surface level of meaning and to develop critical approaches that may be used with any literary text.

Moore and Loyd (128-133) have developed a class project in which Taylor Caldwell's historical novel *A Pillar of Iron* is used as a basis for a writing assignment about Cicero as an individual. "As students read this novel," Moore and Loyd have said (128), "they become involved with Cicero as a real person; they begin to view the historical figures of Caesar, Pompey, and Catiline, not as lifeless statues in a gallery of Roman sculpture, but as living, breathing men who shaped the destiny of the world." There are, of course, many problems with the historical accuracy of *Pillar of Iron*--with what one critic has termed "its insultingly romantic treatment of Cicero, who emerges absolutely unlike the man we all know...from his private correspondence" (Buller, 76)-- and with Taylor Caldwell's own (lack of?) insight into Cicero's character. Nevertheless, this weakness of the novel can actually be used to advantage in the Latin classroom: by contrasting the image of Cicero that emerges from the author's own writings with that which appears in Caldwell's novel, students will be forced to ask themselves what it is about Cicero's speeches and letters that reveal his true character.

Selections from Cicero that may be used for the unit on "Cicero as an Individual" include the *Pro Archia* (which contains Cicero's defense both of literature and of his former teacher), *Ad Familiares* 5.12 (which shows Cicero at his most vain), and *De Natura Deorum* 1.5-6 (which provides Cicero's personal account of the factors that led him to seek comfort in philosophy). Creative exercises for the students might include having them write "Cicero's last letter" on the morning of his death (To whom would this letter be written? What would be his

perspective at the end of his life: Would he humbled or defiant? and How would Cicero summarize all of his accomplishments?), placing Cicero "on the couch" and having him undergo a session of psychological analysis (What would the orator be trying to "repress?" What might have prompted him to seek professional help in the first place? What were the early influences upon him that tended to shape his character?), and drafting the *First Ciceronian Oration* for Catiline to deliver (How would Cicero's motives look to the other side? How would Catiline justify his own actions and impugn the motives of Cicero? When Catiline decides to attack Cicero's weakest spots, what does he choose to criticize?).

***Cicero as a Philosopher:*** Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it was Cicero's philosophical works and letters, even more than his speeches, that interested scholars. Nowhere else in the Ciceronian canon are there so many passages that deal with "the great issues." In addition, these treatises often depict Cicero at his most personal as he struggles with the problems that face him on all fronts or as he gives fatherly advice to his son, Marcus.

Strangely enough, these are among the most difficult of all of Cicero's works to obtain in English-speaking countries. Oxford Classical Texts have been incredibly slow in issuing editions of Cicero's philosophical works. Fortunately for students at the high school level, there is a useful edition, recently revised by Publications of the New England Classical Newsletter and Journal, of seventeen short selections from Cicero's philosophical texts (Ronnick). Edited so as to complement the *Ecce Romani* series, this collection includes passages focusing upon such issues as the nature of philosophy, justice and injustice, the unique talents of each individual, moral goodness, and the like. Another useful source of material, although certain to be more challenging to pre-college students, is a volume of forty-two passages edited by S.J. Wilson under the title of *The Thought of Cicero*. The selections in Wilson's edition are organized by topic under such headings as "The Good Life," "Law and Justice," and "Death and Immortality." Groups of selections such as these, or others chosen by the teacher, can provide an important addition to the readings from Cicero's speeches found in most textbooks.[2] They supply background information for class discussions of crucial issues, thus reinforcing for

students the message that what they learn in the Latin class has relevance elsewhere in their lives. Furthermore, selections from Cicero's philosophical works provide students with an important intellectual context for his speeches. As the class reads and discusses Cicero's treatises, they will consider the question of whether the same lofty principles found there also appear in his oratory. If they do, what are the occasions that lead Cicero to incorporate his philosophical principles into a speech? How do they guide his actions? If they do not, what *does* motivate Cicero if not his commitment to certain philosophical ideals? What should one conclude about a philosophy that has so little effect upon one's actions?

***Cicero as a Poet:*** It is safe to say that what most classicists know about Cicero's poetry is confined to two lines. The first is Quintilian's famous judgment that the orator should never have tried his hand at poetry (*On the Training of the Orator* 10.85). The second is Cicero's own infamous hexameter "*O fortunatam natam me consule Romam*" (quoted by Juvenal at *Satires* 10.122) that may be translated "O happy state of Rome to date her fortune from my consulate." Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the modern world also possesses nearly four hundred lines from Cicero's translation of Aratus' *Phenomena*. Moreover, brief poetic translations appear scattered throughout Cicero's letters and philosophical works, such as the nine line translation of the Sirens' song from the *Odyssey* (*De Finibus* 5.49) and the two line translation of the Simonides inscription at Thermopylae (*Tusculan Disputations* 1.101).

Read alongside the prose works, these passages provide an image of Cicero that most students never see. At the very least they are evidence of the breadth of humanistic learning that Republican Rome held as an ideal. More than this, however, they provide confirmation of Cicero's view, seconded by Quintilian (*On the Training of the Orator* 10.27), that poetry and oratory are similar forms of literature: both affect the emotions, strive for a certain loftiness in style, adopt recognizable rhythms, seek to portray human characters and should, at their best, refresh rather than tire the listener. (On the rhythms of Cicero's cadences, see Rose, 163.) Even though it may be true that Cicero's poetry was infinitely inferior to his prose, the teacher may use these brief passages for a swift introduction to the techniques of scansion or a quick review of Latin poetry in the midst of a unit on prose. Whatever

else they may do, Cicero's poetic attempts provide the useful lesson that, though one may not excel in every field of endeavor, there is much to be gained from making an effort.

***Cicero as a Correspondent:*** Cicero's letters provide students with more fascinating insight into such matters as daily life in the Roman Republic, the political intrigues among Roman magistrates, the relationships among members of a Roman family, the background of Cicero's speeches, the characters who appear in the pages of Roman history, and the various other *tempora* and *mores* of ancient Rome than may be found in any other source. These letters are invaluable historical documents, both because of the facts that they contain and because of what they reveal about Cicero when he is *not* addressing a large audience or laboring under a set topic.

Many of the letters are short and may be read in a single class period or assigned as exercises in sight translation.[3] Many others show Cicero writing to the notable figures of his day...to Caesar (for instance, *Ad Familiares* 7.5, 13.15,16), to Cato the Younger (*Ad Familiares* 15.3-6), to Crassus (*Ad Familiares* 5.8), and to Brutus (*Ad Familares* 13.10-14 and the entirety of *Ad Brutum*). They provide many students with a welcome diversion from the structured rigor of the orations. Complementary readings to the letters might include such speeches as *Pro Caelio* which also gives a "behind the scenes" glimpse into the daily lives of the Roman upper class or *Pro Cluentio* which provides a similar view into the life of a small Italian town.

***Cicero as an Historian:*** History was the one major form of prose that Cicero did not undertake. Nevertheless, both his speeches and his letters provide information about events in the late Republic that is not available anywhere else. One approach to Cicero, therefore, would be for the Latin class to consider the author's works as raw historical documents: What do they add to one's understanding of ancient events that cannot be gained from standard historical sources? Are Cicero's writings "reliable" as historical documents?

Useful texts to assign in this regard are the *Pro Milone*,[4] *Pro Marcello*,[5] *Pro Rabirio*,[6] *Ad Atticum* 14.14 and *Ad Familiares* 6.15-17, 11.1, and 12.1.[7] After examining works of this sort, the students might be asked: If Cicero *had* set about to write a history of his day, what sort of history might it have been? What style might Cicero have adopted

for it and what approach might he have taken? How would that history have been different if it were written while Sulla were still alive? while Pompey were still alive? while Caesar were still alive? Cicero himself would, of course, have been the hero of such a history, but who else might have appeared in a favorable light? Who would have been his villains? Perhaps most importantly, what would have been the "larger patterns" that Cicero would have detected in human affairs? What factors would Cicero have shown as guiding people's choices and towards what end would he have depicted human history as moving?

***Cicero as a Politician:*** Cicero was, as we know, a very successful politician. None of his accomplishments would have been possible without his cunning insight into the workings of the Roman political process. Especially in election years, students may find it interesting to approach Cicero, not as the lofty defender of the Republic, but as the wily politician who knew how to "work" the Roman political machine.

Useful texts to recommend in this regard are the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (the brief handbook on campaigning that was either written by Cicero's brother, Quintus, or is an excellent forgery; this work is available in volume 1 of Tyrrell and Purser, 148-171) and *Ad Atticum* 1.1 (which provides Cicero's own perspective on his campaign). Comparative reading in T.H. White's *The Making of the President* series, or even Joe MacGinniss' *The Selling of the President 1968*, will help students to draw parallels between their reading in Cicero and events occurring in their own day. The students might even be encouraged to address such issues as: Are there any politicians today who seem to be particularly "Ciceronian?" What aspects of their rhetorical style or political philosophy makes them seem so? What would be Cicero's political platform if he were running for office today? Who, in the modern world, would bear the brunt of Cicero's *Philippics*? Is the Ciceronian style something that can be adapted to modern campaigns and the mass media or was it appropriate merely to an earlier day?

***Cicero as a Role Model:*** Finally, it is still possible to approach Cicero, as has been done since the orator's own day, as a model for study, imitation, and (dare one say it?) for inspiration. Cicero has long been paired with Demosthenes as one of the two greatest orators in all of history. Juvenal speaks in the same breath of "the eloquence and fame

of Demosthenes or Cicero" (*eloquium ac famam Demosthenis aut Ciceronis* 10.114) and Quintilian compares their styles at *Training of the Orator* 10.105-112. Plutarch pairs Cicero and Demosthenes in his *Parallel Lives*, a work that also includes a comparative essay examining the work and character of these two orators.

One final approach for the Cicero course, therefore, would be for the teacher to combine readings selected from Cicero's orations with readings, in translation, of several speeches by Demosthenes. The teacher may wish to avoid *On the Crown*--this speech is very long and requires a great deal of historical background in order for students to find it meaningful--and focus on shorter works, such as the *Olynthiacs*, *On the Duties of the State*, or *On the Peace*. In addition, assigned reading in Demosthenes' *Philippics* after students have read portions of Cicero's *Philippics* will help to make the latter works more meaningful to them; such an exercise will also enable the class to see Cicero as part of a continuing rhetorical tradition. In fact, that is one of the advantages of this whole approach: students will come away from the class in Cicero viewing this author, not as an isolated and inexplicable genius, but as the product of a tradition that existed long before his time and that has continued until the present day.

Teachers may also wish to ask students whether they agree with the assessments of Plutarch and Quintilian. This, for instance, is what Plutarch says about the two orators:

1. Demosthenes excelled primarily at oratory; Cicero's achievements were far broader.
2. Demosthenes is always serious; Cicero may be humorous and, at times, even farcical.
3. Cicero was more conceited than Demosthenes.
4. Both were equally persuasive.
5. Demosthenes was never tested, as was Cicero, by service in office.
6. Demosthenes was more mercenary than was Cicero.
7. Demosthenes' banishment was a disgrace; Cicero's exile served to increase his honor.
8. Demosthenes' death was noble; that of Cicero was contemptible and cowardly.

And this is Quintilian's conclusion:

1. The two orators are similar in their logic and in the structure of their speeches, dissimilar in their style.
2. Demosthenes' speeches are tightly packed; Cicero's are more diffuse.
3. Cicero's rhythms are freer than those of Demosthenes.
4. Cicero uses humor to make a point; Demosthenes advances his argument by pounding away at his opponent.
5. From Demosthenes, nothing can be taken away; to Cicero, nothing can be added.
6. Demosthenes is the more painstaking author, Cicero the more natural.

After the students have read works by the two authors and considered these assessments, they might be asked to write their own "Plutarchan" essay on the subject of "Cicero and Demosthenes compared." This type of assignment helps students to develop their own techniques of literary and stylistic criticism. Moreover, it compels them to review the texts that they have studied in class, isolating examples of stylistic and rhetorical technique in support of specific arguments that they wish to make.

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The language that teachers and students use in talking about Cicero has changed substantially during the past century. But the central values of the Ciceronian canon still remain intact: 1) Few Latin authors excelled in so many literary genres. 2) Few provide teachers with so many opportunities to develop their students' skills in oral communication, critical thinking, and the discussion of values. 3) Few provide so much information about Roman history, life, and society. 4) Few can still serve as a model for the students in their own expository prose. The merits of Cicero's works are so diverse that no teacher can give adequate treatment to them all in a single unit or even in a single course. The initial task for all Latin teachers, therefore, is to select those approaches that are best suited to their own interests and training, as well as to the needs, interests and background of their students. Whether that approach turns out to be more traditional or more innovative, merely by giving thought to this process teachers will

guarantee that their courses in Cicero are well focused, organized, and directed towards attaining specific educational goals.

## Notes

1. For example, it appears in a "Special Introduction" to Yonge's translation of Cicero's speeches published at roughly the same time:

   > Oratory was a living power in Athens and in Rome. It has been a power with all civilized peoples. Its power has always been in direct proportion to the eloquence it bore. For, in the living speech lies that hidden charm by which emotions are kindled, that rouses to action, that imparts knowledge. ... Eloquence, the quintessence of oratory, has ever been a safe criterion of the intellectual and moral level of a people, its decline an indication of torpor and of decay of the ideal. In Demosthenes culminated the eloquence of Greece; in Cicero that of Rome. With their disappearance vanish the liberties of the people and self-governance is effaced (Charles Hermann Ohly in Yonge, iii).

2. For teachers who wish to prepare their own set of selections from Cicero's philosophical works, the following might be recommended as a useful beginning: *On Friendship* and *On Old Age* are easy enough to be read in their entirety by most third-year Latin students; *De Finibus* 2.45 is Cicero's discussion on the nature of morality; *Tusculan Disputations* 5.61 contains Cicero's famous retelling of the Sword of Damocles story; and *De Officiis* 78-79 contains Cicero's philosophical principles for opposing what can only be called "the welfare state."

3. In the latter category, for instance, are *Ad Atticum* 1.2 which deals with the birth of Cicero's son and Cicero's election to the consulship; *Ad Familiares* 6.15 which provides Cicero's reaction immediately after the assassination of Caesar; *Ad Familiares* 14.20 which was written to Terentia shortly before their divorce (a good exercise in analyzing the "tone" of a text); *Ad Atticum* 16.1a which shows Cicero critiquing a speech of Brutus and provides insight into Cicero's own rhetorical style; and *Ad Brutum* 1.9 which Cicero wrote to Brutus consoling him on the death of Portia shortly before the battle of Philippi.

4. In most historical accounts of the late Republic, the conflicts of rival gang leaders like Milo and Clodius are usually overshadowed by the larger political conflict of Caesar and Pompey. In light of urban problems in the twentieth century, a speech like *Pro Milone* provides an appropriate counterbalance to the view that nothing of historical significance happens domestically.

5. This speech contains an interesting summary of Cicero's advice to Caesar, detailing the program of social reform that Cicero wanted the dictator to

adopt...and that he may well have adopted had it not been for the Ides of March.

6. A work that illustrates the social chaos afflicting Rome during the time of Marius and Saturninus around 100 B.C. This speech is also interesting because, like the *Catilinarians*, it dates from the year of Cicero's consulship.

7. The last four letters reveal the flurry of activity that occurred in Rome soon after the assassination of Julius Caesar. Most of these letters were written by Cicero to the assassins themselves.

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# 2

# The New French Popular Music in the Foreign Language Classroom: Comprehension, Culture, Americanization

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The evolution of French popular culture has been marked by a noticeable influence from American popular productions (Bertrand and Bordat, *passim*). These productions have often been decried as unhealthy or demeaning by French critics whose close-mindedness prevented them from grasping the importance of the phenomenon, primarily in the realm of popular communications and the media (Mehl, *passim*). The phenomenon of "americanization" associated with this trend (and not exclusively in France) has attracted the attention of students of popular movements and sociologists. It has also led to the emergence and development of cultural comparativism (Rollin, *passim*). The fact that the popular culture of France has had to withstand the effects of a type of "cultural imperialism" coming from the United States has led to the creation of new productions by French popular artists, including popular performers and singers (Prévos, 1992).

During the past decade, the use of original materials in the teaching of foreign languages has been encouraged by many specialists (Abrate; Brown; Elliott; Leith; Melpignano, 1980a; Melpignano, 1980b). This

recommendation was followed by teachers as well as authors. Today, the majority of recently published or updated textbooks, whether for the secondary or college level, have incorporated these societal changes in the cultures whose language we teach or study. These theoretical considerations were part of the concerns of language teachers in Europe and a parallel movement developed there and went one step further. It is the so-called "learner as ethnographer" movement (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 9). Since, on January 1, 1993, the European Community became an administrative reality, it is easily conceivable that individuals from one country will visit other countries and even settle within their boundaries. There will clearly be a need for a deeper understanding of the language as well as the society of the new country of residency. This need can be anticipated by incorporating more cultural elements in the teaching of foreign languages (Byram and Esarte-Sarries, 13-15) and, at the same time, by making sure that these cultural elements are truly relevant to the everyday life of the inhabitants of the foreign country whose language is being learned (Zarate, *passim*).

These theoretical considerations underlie the general goal of this essay. In the history of foreign language teaching, there have been attempts at using uncommon materials, as was the case with the use of the language associated with attempts at seduction (Litzky, *passim*). Uncommon teaching strategies--such as teaching French through the successive steps of an amorous relationship (Beacco, Caré, *passim*)--were adopted as well. In the case of French popular music and popular songs, the latest popular music productions clearly belong to the popular culture of France, and their use is new only insofar as it focuses on recent and sometimes ignored phenomena and trends. The use of these popular songs, French and francophone rap songs in particular, could help in presenting the students with materials that clearly fit within the realm of contemporary French popular culture. In addition, our American students will learn to relate to the everyday lives of French youngsters who belong to a similar socio-cultural group. Because these musical productions belong to an artistic form familiar to our students, they may also make them aware of the influence of the American musical medium on French popular music and of the differences between the two. In addition, French popular songs provide the listener/student with true-to-life linguistic examples and patterns (some regrettably not always grammatically correct). Their lyrics may help shed light upon social and societal problems seldom introduced

or featured in the majority of textbooks devoted to the teaching of French language to secondary- or college-level American students.

Three aspects of foreign language teaching will be considered here. The first is comprehension. Students will have to be made aware of the peculiarities of some of the lyrics of recent French pop music recordings in order to understand fully the extent to which they convey a message or suggest a state of mind. The second aspect is culture. Here, too, there will be a need to determine whether the listeners have grasped only those aspects of French popular songs that are similar to songs they can hear on American radio or music television channels. The third is americanization. Once the students have become aware of the patterns of influence between popular music recordings from France and the United States, they will have acquired a way of analyzing and evaluating the varied components of each type of recording and will better understand the general phenomenon of cultural influence.

## Comprehension

The lyrics of popular songs--or at least excerpts--have been commonly used as texts for exercises. They are even included in testing primarily listening comprehension of the foreign language being taught. These lyrics combine several aspects which, at times, may complicate their selection. First of all, some popular artists, whether abroad or in the United States, do not sing very clearly because they either force their voice, scream, or mumble. In a few isolated cases the natural accent of the performer may be at the root of the problem. Linguistic comprehension may indeed become troublesome in some situations. One should keep in mind that, at least after several semesters of foreign language instruction, students should be made aware that not all linguistic productions originate in perfect conditions. Some speakers also do not always intend to have their message readily understood. In such a case, the choice of materials will be the instructor's responsibility and will be heavily dependent upon the anticipated use of the selected example.

**Musical Example:**

"Il tua son petit frère"--Bérurier Noir
*Concerto pour détraqués*
Bondage Records RRR 009 (©1985)

*Il tua son petit frère*
*Il n'avait jamais vu la mer*
*Il créchait dans un taudis*
*Parmi les rats et les souris*
*Il étrangla son proprio*
*Et se laissa tomber de haut*
*Mais ce n'était qu'un p'tit bâtard*
*Fabriqué comme une vraie tare.*

The first aspect of these lyrics is that they are not very complicated linguistically speaking. Some students may have to be made aware of the use of the *passé simple* and possibly of the words *crécher* (popular French for "to live") and *proprio* (a shortening of the standard French word *propriétaire*).

The second aspect is the lyrics themselves. It is well known that popular songs sometimes include words which belong either to street slang or popular speech. In French, such is the case with *«verlan»* (Barreyre, 92-93), whose practitioners invert the syllables of a given word and create a completely new and often incomprehensible word. In this case several possibilities arise. The instructor may provide translations of the few passages that represent a barrier to comprehension. The instructor may also explain why these words are used and how they have been created. Linguistic inventions are present in American popular music productions as well, as "Efil4zaggin" ("Niggaz4Life" in reverse), the title of a record by the American rap group NWA illustrates, and parallels between the two languages may be highlighted.

**Musical Example:**

"Paris, Paris, Paris"--Les Garçons Bouchers
*La saga des Garçons Bouchers*
Boucherie Productions/Polygram 842798-1 (©1990)

*Un skin couché rue d'Oberkampf*
*Une petite fille trop défoncée*
*Un concert qui finit en sang*
*Un rebeu encore satonné*
*Les keufs qui tournent, les keufs qui flairent*
*Un keupon se retrouve nus pieds.*

*Aux Halles, y a comme idée que ça craint certaines nuits noires*
*A Pigalle pas question: tout l'monde classé tricards*
*Des pavés d'Odéon restent que des vieux babs*
*De Barbès à Chapelle, c'est juste les plans arabes*
*Les bourgeois tiennent le reste à coups de girophares*
*Et n'laissent que quelques murs aux hordes de barbares.*

In this case there is a clear need for linguistic explanations since most of the key words are *verlan* French. The word *skin* refers, of course, to the skinheads; the word *rebeu* is the *verlan* of another *verlan* word *beur*, which refers to the sons of Arab immigrants; *keufs* is the common *verlan* word for the police, based on a *verlan* form of the English word "f***;" the word *keupon* is the *verlan* form of "punk" and characterizes such an individual. The expression *ça craint* is easily understandable; the word *tricard* is a direct borrowing from French slang; the *babs* are the older intellectuals who continue to live as they used to in the 1960s when the hippie ideology was in fashion; a *plan* used to be the French equivalent of "to score" in the slang of drug addicts, but nowadays, it has come to mean any type of project--whether legal or illegal.

The description of some of the most famous sections of the French capital could be used both as a linguistic example as well as a cultural vignette since it refers to an aspect of Paris seldom--if ever--mentioned in textbooks, the several neighborhoods where "minorities"--ethnic, economic, or intellectual--reside. Les Halles is often mentioned in textbooks as the modernized section of Paris, which includes the Centre Pompidou as well as the famous Forum underground shopping center (Large, *passim*). Its night life, the less glamorous aspect of the neighborhood, is hardly ever mentioned. Pigalle, famous for its night life, has definitively lost its attractiveness. The Odéon neighborhood, close to the Sorbonne, is peopled by intellectuals often longing for the cultural atmosphere of the late 1960s. The Barbès section of Paris is known for its dense Arab population.

Another situation will arise when the instructor elects to use the lyrics of French popular songs in class. There are many examples of French artists who purposefully inject words in other languages in their own songs; the examples range from Arabic expressions or African dialectical phrases to English or Spanish words and sentences. But, at least in the case of English words interspersed in the lyrics of French popular songs, it is

quite likely that the odd--or at times frankly wrong--pronunciation of these words will create a problem similar to the other linguistic variations presented above.

**Musical Example:**

"Anthropophage"--Les Garçons Bouchers
*Les Garçons Bouchers, Tome 2*
Boucherie Productions/Musidisc 101111 (©1988)

*Et la nuit dans mon lit et le jour dans les faubourgs*
*Je les regarde la langue pendue, ce monde ignoble me rend goulu*
*Mon penchant pour les gens n'est pas pervers mais culinaire.*
*Be bop a Lula* (x5)

The cannibalistic narrator's point of view is rather humorous because of its implausibility. A majority of English-speaking listeners may have difficulty in identifying the famous rock and roll reference repeated five times after each verse. The French singer clearly butchers the English phrase and his rendition of "Be bop a Lula" may not be understood as such by a majority of English-speaking listeners.

Finally, there are popular songs whose lyrics are not very difficult to understand, but whose overall meaning may appear to be insignificant or even lacking entirely. These songs are generally performed by a group of artists well known for their linguistic peculiarities. Such songs have been part of the French popular music repertoire for decades, and their performers have enjoyed widespread popularity. In some cases, these performers were known for their exclusive devotion to songs whose linguistic esoterism and phonetic invention formed the core of their attractiveness for their intended audiences. In France, the repertoires of Bobby Lapointe, Yves Montand, and Alain Bashung provide striking illustrations.

**Musical Example:**

"Le papa du papa"--Bobby Lapointe
*Intégrale des enregistrements de Bobby Lapointe*
Philips 6654002 (©1975)

*Le papa du papa de mon papa*
*Etait un petit pioupiou*
*La maman du papa de mon papa*

*Elle, elle était nounou*
*Lui son nom c'était Aimé Dépèch'*
*Elle s'appelait Amélie Vite*
*Et attendez, attendez, vous allez voir la suite.*

A staccato effect is at the core of the lyrics, but the many imbedded puns are important in these same lyrics. First, the words *ploupiou* and *nounou* refer to baby speech and mean "bird" and "nurse" or "wet nurse." The names of the two characters mentioned here are phonetic puns, the second with a clearly risqué connotation.

**Musical Example:**
"Idylle Philoménale"--Yves Montand
*Yves Montand dans son dernier 'One Man Show' intégral*
CBS 67281 (℗1972)

*Comme j'ai un chien et une chienne*
*Qui me viennent d'un Autrichien*
*Ma petite femme qui est vosgienne*
*Me dit «Pour élever vos chiens*
*Vous aurez beaucoup de peine*
*Car au pays transalpin*
*J'ai connu une Helvétienne*
*Qu'a jamais pu élever le sien.»*

This song is part of the French music-hall repertoire. As is clearly noticeable, one of its striking features is the rhyming pattern in each of the verses: lines have endings which alternate phonetically from feminine to masculine. This phonetic peculiarity is easily perceived by anyone who listens to the song and may not be so easily caught by simply reading the transcription of the lyrics. As for the meaning of the verse, it is naturally secondary and pales in comparison to the phonetic effects.

**Musical Example:**
"Chat"--Alain Bashung
*Passé le Rio Grande*
Barclay 829403-1 (℗1986)

*J'enfile des perles à rebours*
*Capitaine prend la némo*

*C'est pas uniquement un bruit qui court*
*Souris dansez, notez greffier*
*Le chat veut finir en beauté.*

In this verse several types of puns, suggestive associations, slang and popular words as well as suggestive use of *verlan* are found. The first line includes the phonetic pun about the harbor where the Japanese bombed the American fleet on December 7, 1941. The second line includes a *verlan* word for change (*monnaie*) which, once associated with the word *capitaine*, suggests the name of Jules Verne's hero in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The fourth line sketches a group of dancing mice when the cat (the word *greffier* used to refer to a cat in old popular French) is busy. The last line suggests the title of the famous children's story "Puss 'n Boots" (in French "Le chat botté") owing to the expression *finir en beauté* which could also be seen as describing the finish of the verse which, indeed, ends with a flourish. With a song like this, the instructor may prefer to let the students discover as many elements as they can and not insist on the multiplicity of puns and suggestions, which may hamper both the pleasure of listening to the song and the future efforts of students/ listeners.

## Culture

In order to teach culture, French language teachers have several possible avenues of action. The first, and more traditional, possibility consists of presenting clearly culturally related materials and focusing on their role and importance within the whole of French culture. The second possibility consists of mediating the cultural content of the materials. Tradition-minded teachers will undoubtedly prefer the first approach, which often allows them to focus more on the historically grounded aspects of French culture. The second approach is less direct but may yield interesting results because it does differentiate the linguistic and cultural components of the text presented to the student. Such is evidently the case with popular songs and with the recent rap music productions coming out of France which have widely influenced the music scene throughout the 1980s (Prévos, 1992).

The lyrics of French and francophone rap songs provide a diversified array of cultural themes and examples useful for introducing students to contemporary and recent cultural happenings in France. This author and

many colleagues as well have noticed that the use of materials encompassing musical styles ressembling those already familiar to the students (as is evidently the case with rap and hip hop) was easier because the stylistic features of such music did not have to be explained or discussed. Today, whether in high schools or in colleges and universities, rap music and hip hop repertoires form a solidly identifiable core of musical materials which are undoubtedly familiar to a large majority of students. Since French rap songs are based upon the same musical and stylistic organizational scheme, they become immediately identifiable by American listeners who then only have to focus on the linguistic aspect of the song in order to understand it fully.

One component found in both American and French rap songs is the introduction of the rapper or group of performers. Some of these introductions are short and easily understandable and may provide a means of allowing students to invent their own introduction.

**Musical Example:**

"Sur la version"--Pouppa Claudio and Ragga Melody
*Sur la version*
Island 848743-2 (℗1991)

*Pouppa Claudio sur la version,*
*Tiens bien le riddim* (x4)
*Je me présente, Pouppa Claudio,*
*Je viens de Toulon,*
*Je suis D.J. Daddy,*
*Ça y est, je rentre en action*
*Ecoute bien le style, écoute la façon*
*Que j'ai de toaster et de chanter sur les versions.*
*Il paraît qu'à Toulon au microphone je suis un champion.*

Here there are only a few words that may need to be explained. The first is *riddim* which is only a phonetic adaptation from the Jamaican pronunciation of "rhythm;" the second is *toaster* which is a French neologism using the Black English vernacular verb "to toast" as a root. Each student could easily use this pattern to create a new introduction with few changes (just switching names and cities of birth, for example) to more extensive modifications including verbs characterizing the student's activities.

A more developed exercise involves the creation of a complete life-story. Here too, there are examples in French rap lyrics that detail the life of some performers. Both the rappers' and our students' lives seldom fall within the quiet and respectable patterns encountered in most of the examples in textbooks. Therefore, these lyrics may introduce the students to the difficulties encountered by some young French people, whether their parents are French or immigrants from North Africa or the Caribbean. Since the following excerpts constitute longer linguistic exercises, they may either be dealt with in stages or as separate units. The example below serves as an illustration of such a case. It includes popular speech, allusions to disreputable activities and their consequences (juvenile detention), as well as a type of life story that may be seen as reminiscent of the Horatio Algier tradition in the United States.

**Musical Example:**

"Mon CV"--Tonton David
*Le blues des racailles*
Labelle Noir/Delabel DE 030925 (©1991)

*Mon CV, j'te donne mon CV*
*67 Tonton sur la planète /.../*
*70 la première fois que j'ai vu pleurer mama /.../*
*73 nos toutes premières garba /.../*
*78 on vole les Adidas /.../*
*79 on se met dans la reti /.../*
*80 rendez-vous à Vincennes*
*Au terrain de cross pour taper les CR*
*81 c'est l'époque chéara*
*82 c'est l'époque la péta /.../*
*84 le retour dans la reti /.../*
*85 dans les substances chimiques /.../*
*86 on touche les premiers matics /.../*
*87 j'peux pas dire ce que j'ai fait*
*87 j'étais au CJD*
*88 début de ma carrière musicale /.../*
*89 on embellit la partie à Peuchère /.../*
*90 Tonton top célébrité*
*91 on est dans le Top 50*
*92 avec un big compte en banque /.../*

The language is clearly close to street language and popular French; it includes a healthy dose of *verlan*: *reti* for *tire* a French popular word for picking pockets; *chéara* for *arrachage* which refers to stealing by stripping the victim of the desired items; *péta* refers to panhandling, *CJD* refers to the Center for Young Delinquents. In addition, a few English words (used mostly as qualifiers), are injected into the lyrics in order to convey the importance of the performer. He is a "**top** *célébrité*" with a "**big** *compte en banque*"! The way the performer expresses his birth by stating his arrival on the planet (*Tonton sur la planète*) is rather surprising. As for the chemical substances in line 85 the words are clear enough to be understood by any American student at the secondary or college level. Line 89, where the young artist performs in clubs, Peuchère in this instance, may require a few explanations.

The majority of the students in our French classes could clearly use this pattern for a detailed sketch of their personal history. Such an exercise may prove more interesting to them than a simple recitation once it becomes evident that they may even create expressions of their own for the events which have marked their life. The language of such narration could include direct translations or neologisms.

The cultural aspects of rap lyrics are not confined to this kind of activity. They may help provide relevant materials for an explanation of the social and economic situation of the children of the Arab, African, and Caribbean immigrants who entered France in the 1960s and 1970s (sometimes illegally). Some artists have followed a rather well-established tradition in French popular music: they have aimed their songs at politicians named in their lyrics. In one case, a singer addressed Edith Cresson, the first woman Prime Minister of the French Fifth Republic in 1991-1992:

**Musical Example:**

"Edith"--Destroy Man
*Nouvelle Classe*
Barclay 513012-2 (©1991)

*Edith,*
*Tes enfants ont des problèmes,*
*même quand ils sont bronzés,*
*on dirait qu'ils sont blêmes,*
*ils restent trop sans rêver dans les cages d'escalier*
*plantés comme des totems.*

Other artists use symbols and suggestive expressions in order to make their message less abrasive. MC Solaar uses such an expression in the refrain of one of his compositions:

**Musical Example:**

"Matière grasse contre matière grise"--MC Solaar
*Qui sème le vent récolte le tempo*
Polydor 511133-2 (©1991)

*C'est la matière grasse contre la matière grise.*

For the singer, the gray matter (intelligence) is on the side of those who oppose the ones who have become fatter during their stay in the administrations or in the government.

Most of the lyrics are cruder in their denunciations. They aim at both shocking their audiences into action and at forcing them to take a new look at their surroundings, whether they are on the side of the law and order or friendly to the ideals defended by the performer. Rap lyrics do not have a monopoly on crude words and nasty vocabulary, but they do appear to include an unusual amount of such words or expressions. The brutality of the lyrics often conveys the message of social criticism or clearly shows the anger of the performer.

**Musical Example:**

"Quelle gratitude?"--Suprème NTM
*Authentik*
Epic 467994-2 (©1991)

*Quelle gratitude devrai-je avoir pour la France?*
*Moi, Joey Starr qu'on considère comme un barbare*
*Donc j'encule tous ces moutons de fonctionnaires*
*Tous ces pédés de militaires*
*Qui pendant plus d'une année*
*M'ont séquestré, malmené*
*Sous prétexte de faire de moi*
*Un homme, un vrai.*

In these lyrics, the narrator (Joey Starr) depicts graphically both public servants and members of the French military, as well as the "punishment" they deserve. The year-long forced detention (*séquestré*) and its inherent

sufferings (*malmené*) express a strong critique of the French compulsory military service.

There are nevertheless songs about the sad and sometimes hopeless everyday life of young people in the popular suburbs. The lyrics of these songs are less crude and allow for a more understanding attitude. In the majority of cases, the underlying ideology presented in these songs is close to that of the French anti-racist association *SOS Racisme* whose leaders advocate integration and peaceful co-existence instead of violence and ethnic conflict.

The use of the word "ghetto" by the French rap artists should not be seen so much as a direct borrowing from the African-American artists but, instead, as a means of catching the attention of their listeners for whom the word has meant situations and social environments foreign to France.

**Musical Example:**

"Enfants du ghetto"--Saliha
*Rapattitude*
Labelle Noir/Virgin 30767 (©1989)

*Enfants du ghetto*
*Fans de tempo*
*Arme ou came*
*Sont ses mots*
*Au quotidien, la mort et la misère.*
*Le bonheur a pris la fuite*
*et laisse un goût amer.*
*Terre bannie par des préjugés*
*Remercie le ciel de ne pas y être né.*

Saliha expresses an attitude similar to that of many African Americans when she underlines the harshness of the popular neighborhood (*arme ou came*) and the social stigma associated to being born in such a place (*Remercie le ciel de ne pas y être né*).

Rap lyrics, with all their crudeness and their brutality, are not without their humorous side. Some French rappers do inject humor into their songs. At times, it is self-deprecating humor, the type of humor that requires its practitioner to be well immersed in his own social group in order not to be accused of ethnic biases. In a few cases, the humor is based both on funny descriptions and on bilingual puns putting into play phonetics and meaning. Such is the case with a tune by the group IAM.

**Musical Example:**
"Do The Raï Thing"--IAM
*De la planète Mars*
Labelle Noir/Virgin 30834 (©1991)

> *Cheb Khaled, tu connais au moins?*
> *C'est le Public Enemy arabe.*
> *Il raconte tout du début jusqu'à la fin*
> */.../*
> *Do the raï thing mon frère.*

Anyone familiar with French popular music will know that Cheb Khaled is a performer specializing in Arabic popular songs known as *raï*. The bilingual pun in the refrain *Do the raï thing mon frère* does indeed refer to Spike Lee's "Do The Right Thing."

## Americanization

If it remains true that French rappers have borrowed from their African-American models, it is also evident that their borrowings have undergone more than just a translation. It may safely be said that, in the majority of cases, French rappers have, in fact, adapted African-American rap lyrics and musical techniques to their own social and artistic surroundings. Prévos (1992, 20-28) has noticed that French rap lyrics do not include direct references to North Africa, nor do they advocate any clear Afrocentric perspective. This is easily understood once the ethnic backgrounds of most French rappers are taken into consideration: the majority of them belong to the second of third generation Arab immigration from North Africa. Their parents or grandparents left their countries of origin because of economic hardships and, even today, these regions are still marked by economic depression and the rise of religious conservatism. The descendants of Arab immigrants often live in economically depressed neighborhoods in France, but they also know that they could not find a better standard of living back in their countries of origin. Thus, they cannot advocate a "back to Africa" ideology. In fact, some French politicians of the extreme right push for a forced deportation of the illegal immigrants back to their countries of origin.

The fact that the past decades were marked by a clear American influence within the popular culture productions of France has not escaped

the attention of many observers (Bertrand and Bordat, *passim*) who, according to their own political leanings, have drawn conclusions ranging from keen enthusiasm to wholesale rejection of the phenomenon. Focused studies dealing from a more culturally comparatist perspective rather than from a political point of view (Prévos, 1986; Prévos, 1989) have revealed the mechanisms of the adaptation and borrowing phenomena that have left their imprint upon the so-called "americanization" of French popular culture.

From the outside, there is no doubt that the musical examples mentioned above may be easily related to their African-American models. Their musical structure, the mode of delivery of the lyrics and, to an even greater degree, the appearance of most of their performers make these remarks almost redundant. It is true that French rap sounds are very much like African-American rap. If it were not for the fact that the lyrics are sung in French, most listeners would not be able to notice any marked difference in the social, economic, political, and cultural surroundings of the performers.

Once the listeners take these elements into consideration, they may discover that new perspectives will be opened and new understandings will be possible. The listeners/students will be able to gain a better insight into cultural productions seldom considered as worthy of detailed attention by many language teachers who prefer to focus on more traditional representations rapidly becoming irrelevant and obsolete. This inclusion of new French and francophone musical productions may also attract more students because they are well aware of the musical recordings produced by African-American rap performers.

In order to make our students aware of the impact of their popular culture on the French popular culture, it is necessary to plan this process by starting with cultural elements familiar to them in their own country. This is why recent editions of language textbooks (for example, Bragger and Rice) focus on fast food restaurants or popular American items (ranging from food to drink to clothing), which would be encountered in France by any American tourist. Our students already familiar with the great majority of the above items need not be introduced to them before understanding their role and their cultural importance. Recently recorded popular songs used more frequently in foreign language classrooms can play a significant role in making our students aware of the impact of their own popular culture upon the language and the culture they study.[1]

## Note

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# 3
# Promoting Communicative CompetenceThrough Task-Based Speech Activity

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## Introduction

Historically, written language and literature study have been valued over oral communication in the foreign language classroom. Students were, and in many cases still are, taught foreign languages through written models selected and ordered by their teachers and their textbooks, ignoring oral language production and any concern for communicative competence (Brown and Yule, 1). In the past, teachers rarely used the target language in the classroom with their students except when going over formal textbook exercises. Fortunately, new research knowledge and paradigm shifts have propelled the foreign language teaching profession from a non-communicative approach into a communicative approach. As Kramsch (1987, 243) has asserted, the goal of language instruction should be "socialization into and literacy in a foreign language and culture." Kramsch's goal emphasizes communicative language teaching. Her view incorporates the development of communicative competence along with

strategies to negotiate meaning in the foreign language classroom, with the eventual goal of achieving some competence in real oral language use beyond the classroom setting.

In this paper we first consider the constructs of **communicative competence** and the **negotiation of meaning** as crucial elements in language learning and use. In the history of language instruction, these constructs have only recently come to the fore as we have come to understand better how language and communication work in society and how people learn both first and second languages. With these issues as a backdrop, the second section of this paper explores language and communication in the classroom with special emphasis on task-based speech activity that allows learners to solve communication dilemmas.

## Communicative Competence and the Negotiation of Meaning

Communicative competence and negotiation of meaning are woven into how we, as foreign language educators, understand interactive discourse today. These constructs are considered vital components for successful cross-cultural communication and understanding. An interlocutor needs to know how to communicate both functionally and interactively in a culturally and linguistically different environment. Achieving a level of communicative competence enables a person to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within varying contexts. The term embraces multiple important subcomponents. Canale and Swain (29) have discussed four: (1) grammatical competence--knowledge of lexical, grammatical, syntactic and phonological rules; (2) discourse competence--one's ability to connect sentences into meaningful form; (3) sociolinguistic competence--knowledge of social and cultural rules; and (4) strategic competence--use of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies. The meanings of words depend on where, how, and with whom an utterance is made. The same words can be interpreted differently depending on the context of the social and cultural situation. The common English expression "okay," for example, can indicate a host of things. It can indicate agreement about something, it can be a discourse signal for a person to continue talking, and it can signal a parent's or a teacher's disgust. Distributions and hierarchies of discourse exist within social circles, institutions, and between and among the sexes, even within

the same culture. (See Tannen for an excellent discussion.) However, while there are many recognized components that comprise communicative competence, Savignon (1983, 40) suggests that strategic competence is probably the most important component for beginning- and intermediate-level language learners since they are the ones with the least amount of language proficiency, thus the need for an ability to negotiate during face-to-face conversation.

Negotiation, what interlocutors do while conversing to achieve successful communication, lies at the heart of communicative competence. For conversations to progress and for speakers to be able to understand each other and to reach "states of intersubjectivity" or the "transcendence of the 'private' worlds of the participants" (Rommetveit, 94), it may be necessary for them to (a) indicate that they understand or do not understand, or that they want the conversation to continue; (b) help each other to express ideas; and (c) make corrections when necessary to what is said or how it is said (Richards, Platt and Weber, 190). Varonis and Gass (74) have even gone so far as to construct a model of the negotiation process among non-native speakers of English, a model that was corroborated by Brooks (1992a), who studied secondary school learners of Spanish as a foreign language engaged in a two-way problem-solving task.

Communicative competence and negotiation of meaning are integral components of oral discourse. However, with an understanding of the kinds of talk and social interaction that typically take place in foreign language classrooms, especially during formal instruction and whole group activity, Kramsch (1981, 19) has asserted that

> the traditional patterns of classroom discourse are working against [language learners] as they try to develop conversational fluency. They have acquired discursive competence in their mother tongue within its culturally appropriate rules for behavior, but as far as the foreign language is concerned, they have been exposed in the classroom to highly unusual or even deviant discourse patterns that have nothing in common either with the discourse patterns of their mother tongue or with those of the foreign language and culture.

This sad and frustrating fact creates certain dilemmas for the language teaching profession, especially if some measurable level of competence is a prominent goal of foreign language learning.

Although many in the field have contributed to how we now understand these constructs (e.g., Coulthard; Grimes; Gumperz; Heath; Hymes; Kramsch, 1987; Macdonell; Savignon, 1990; Wertsch), this understanding of communicative competence, negotiation, and discourse has become ubiquitously manifested in the foreign language teaching profession as a compendium of textbook exercises that purport to provide learners with opportunities to communicate. Communication, however, as manifested in these exercises, is generally assumed to be a simple matter of packaging information in words--encoding--to be sent to another who then decodes it. This transmission model of communication or the "conduit metaphor" has recently come under scrutiny (see, for example, Ahmed; Brooks and Donato; Donato; Reddy; Wertsch), for it paints an extremely constrained view of what communication and speech activity are. Moreover, a closer look at these textbook activities will reveal that there is an overwhelmingly large number of interview-type tasks. These tasks are said to allow learners to share specific personal information with one another about such things as family background, personal likes and dislikes, weekend activities, daily routines, and so on. Although these kinds of personal topics are certainly important in coming to know more about one another, the interview-type task as classroom activity does not seem to provide natural or even realistic opportunities to negotiate meanings and overcome communication dilemmas, thereby allowing learners to work toward collective or individual goals (Ahmed; Donato; Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun).

What needs to be taken into consideration is that although these kinds of interview-type tasks might seem on the surface to reflect everyday kinds of conversations, when they actually unfold between language learners and thus become real "speech activity" (Coughlan and Duff), their conversations do not even look or sound like real people talking for real purposes (Brooks, 1989, 1990; Kinginger). In this regard, Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (in press) provide a comprehensive review of research findings and conclude that "interviews do not guarantee conditions for goal-oriented or negotiated interaction in which learners can take active roles.... Opportunities for learners to negotiate or exchange information are also limited in...interviews since information flows in only one direction--from answer-supplying learner to question-asking teacher or researcher." Brooks (forthcoming) has found that a standard interview-type task provided to university-level third-semester Spanish learners

under experimental conditions was extremely limiting in that few if any negotiation or "nonunderstanding routines" (Varonis and Gass, 73) were evident. Students simply read the questions provided on the interview sheet. When they got the requisite answer they merely continued to the next question until the list of presupplied questions was exhausted, at which time they said "We're done." There existed little if any negotiation opportunity. Although the students complied with the activity demands, little if any real engagement with one another or with the task itself took place (Brooks and Donato). If non-proficient language users are to avoid misunderstandings with native speakers and, more importantly, to get at more information for continued clarification and confirmation, and thus maintain social contact and achieve "intersubjectivity" (Rommetveit, 94), they must have opportunities to negotiate and problem solve with one another in the classroom. While seemingly tautological, the fact remains that language learners need to negotiate in order to learn to negotiate (cf. Brown and Palincsar; Rogoff). Task-based speaking activities that contain the requirement to problem-solve have been shown to optimize the potential for negotiation activity between teachers and learners and between learners, thus enhancing their chances at attaining some level of communicative competence in the target language (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun).

## Task-Based Approaches to Teaching and Learning Activity

The competent speaker needs to know and understand the meanings, functions, and appropriateness of utterances that underlie speech in a given cultural milieu. This instructional goal can be accomplished to some degree through task-based speaking activity. Tasks "refer to a range of work plans [that] have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning --from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision making" (Breen, 23).

> (In language activity) an activity or action is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e., as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production

> of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative..., since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity [that] goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake.... It has been argued that this is a more effective way of learning a language since it provides a purpose for the use and learning of a language... (Richards, Platt, and Weber, 289).

Nunan (11) further writes that when provided tasks, learners are involved in processing and producing language for communicative ends. A task, comprised of several components, is complete in its own right and includes a task goal (what is to be accomplished/learned), input (data), the activity (task at hand), the teacher's role (facilitator and monitor), the learners' roles (conversational partner or group member), and the setting (classroom/pair work). Meaningful language instruction targets knowing when, where, and with whom to use language in general.

The opportunity to negotiate with other interlocutors has been identified in the theoretical literature as an extremely important factor in second language development. Interactionist theories of second language acquisition (e.g., Hatch; Krashen; Long), for example, maintain that "language learning is assisted through the social interaction of learners and their interlocutors, particularly when they negotiate toward mutual comprehension of each other's messages" (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun, in press). Negotiation is regarded as a very necessary and natural part of face-to-face conversation and, according to Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (381), serves as a "vehicle of language socialization." When face-to-face talk is negotiated between and among language learners themselves, it becomes tailored to their level. They possess the right to request more information, clarification, or confirmation of information and intentions of their partners. In this way, learners' personal involvement or "joint activity" (Tharp and Gallimore, 89) in co-constructing the speaking event, as they deem necessary to achieve their communicative goals and fulfill their communicative needs, allows the activity to become more meaningful. In traditional kinds of classroom talk, however, there exists an asymmetrical relationship between teacher and student, as the former maintains control over topic and direction of the instructional discourse (see Ellis, 125, and Kramsch, 1981, for excellent reviews). Moreover, the

teacher usually takes over the job of repairing communication breakdowns (Kramsch, 1981; Tharp and Gallimore).

There exist two broad categories of speaking tasks, one-way and two-way tasks. In a one-way task one interactant holds the requisite information to solve a problem and is required to give it to another. For example, when a student is asked to tell another student how to draw a particular picture or diagram, or to tell another student how to arrange items on the table, how to put something together, or how different pictures are to be put into some specified order, one person holds all the requisite information. In a two-way task, by contrast, each participant is "engaged in a relationship of mutual request and suppliance; [thus] they exchange information in a two-way direction.... Since no one interactant holds all of the necessary information, but all this information is crucial to the task goal, interactants would have to pool their partial, but crucial information as if they were arranging pieces of a puzzle. Thus they would work toward convergence, to achieve the one acceptable task outcome" (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun, in press).

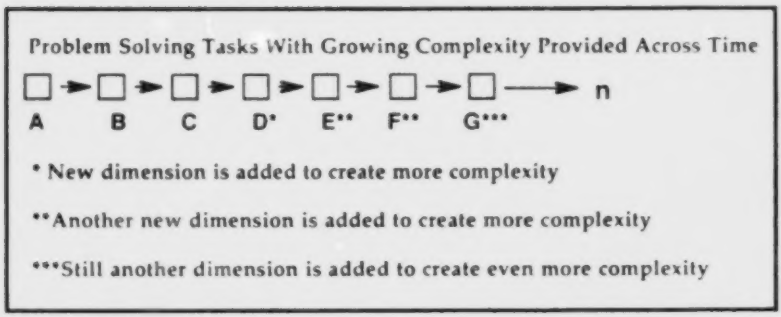
An example of a two-way information-gap speaking task of this type for classroom foreign language learners has been suggested by Brooks (1992a) and researched by Brooks (1992b) and Brooks and Donato (1992; Donato and Brooks). This specific task, though not entirely new, is called a "jig-saw" task, one that supplies each partner in a dyad (or a triad) with a partial diagram or configuration of items on a grid. Each member of the dyad has half of the information needed to complete the diagram. The learners' task becomes one of convergence of shared information and, more importantly, perspective as they talk back and forth to set goals, to orient one another, and to learn from each other what is missing and needed to complete their diagrams. When the task is completed both interactants (theoretically) will have drawn their own copies of the same diagram.

Brooks (1992a) further proposes that the jig-saw speaking task could easily be adapted for learners at various linguistic levels, some tasks being more abstract and complex than others. However, tasks of this sort are not simply added to the curriculum. Care must be taken to "enculturate" or "socialize" learners into participating in these kinds of tasks in the classroom (Rogoff). In the Appendix are examples of a series of rather complex and demanding jig-saw speaking tasks that were recently used with five dyads comprised of third-semester university-level learners of Spanish to gather data for an investigation into what happens to the

language that language learners use while participating in successive analogous tasks of this type across time (Donato and Brooks). Preliminary analyses reveal that these students took successively less time to complete the task when comparing Task 1 through Task 5. Students also tended to get better and more efficient at proceeding through the task. There were fewer comprehension breakdowns over time. Moreover, their use of English, quite evident in some of the groups, became drastically reduced as the students became more and more adept at doing the tasks.

In a re-analysis of an earlier study of third-year high school students of Spanish engaged in a similar kind of jig-saw task (Brooks 1992a), Brooks and Donato found that while these students were engaged in the task, much of their talk really had nothing to do with sending propositional information back and forth about the pieces and parts found on their diagrams. Rather, much of their talk was about how to do the task together, i.e., they spent activity time orienting one another toward specific procedures for doing the task. Their talk also consisted of talk about the language itself that they were using to perform the task together. In other words, these learners commented on specific words that they either did or did not understand (e.g., "Ah! *Solamente*. That's a good word!"). It was also noted that, while English was used by these students from time to time, a frustrating thing for most foreign language teachers to endure, their English served a very strategic discursive purpose, allowing them both to initiate and to sustain further discourse with one another. Students were noted to use English to express, for example, frustration about the task (e.g., "This is frustrating," or "Too bad I don't know what that means," or "Ah man!" or "Wow!"). Nevertheless, once the frustration was expressed, they continued with Spanish to the best of their ability toward completion of the task. The use of their first language then "enabled the learners to establish control of the discourse by explicitly commenting on their linguistic tools used in its construction...a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production" (5). In the light of the preceding discussion, we would like to propose a model time schedule for implementing jig-saw tasks, or any kind of two-way problem-solving or information-gap tasks, in foreign language classrooms. Figure 1 provides a schematic view of a process for introducing these kinds of tasks across time. Each box in the figure represents a separate opportunity to participate in a different but analogous information-gap speaking task, whose purpose is to draw students into a problem-solving situation.

Figure 1.




By participating in successive analogous tasks across time, students are provided multiple opportunities to draw upon previous learning to solve new communication problems. For example, in opportunity A, the teacher and the students are together as a whole group going through the stages of learning how to participate in a jig-saw task. With, perhaps, the help of the overhead projector, the teacher can project each portion of the task and suggest how they might ask and answer questions. The teacher might even call upon students to participate with him/her in the target language by taking roles in the problem-solving task. In this way, the teacher in essence "apprentices" (Rogoff) students into how to accomplish this kind of task, much as a parent apprentices a child in learning to bake a batch of cookies. In opportunities B and C, then, students work together in their dyads to solve an analogous problem-solving task. The teacher can walk around, check on students' progress, and help individual students with specific lexical or structural problems. The basic structure of the task, however, does not change, thus allowing the learners to become comfortable with the particular demands of the task. Here, the students are primarily learning how to participate in small groups to solve communication problems in order to work through a puzzle-like task. Understand that students may have to use varying amounts of English to get over really rough spots in their attempts to solve the problem presented to them. This situation is to be expected as English is used as a thinking tool to mediate their problem-solving (Brooks and Donato).

In opportunity D, students are provided with a problem-solving speaking task that, although similar in basic task requirements, also calls

upon them to have to ask for and give different kinds of information. Theoretically, at this point they are well enough aware of the structure of the task that they do not become excessively confused or overly daunted by the addition of a new problem. Likewise, in successive opportunities, such as E and G, students are able to participate together in jig-saw tasks that yet again provide certain additional complications that previously were not there, such as the addition of a more detailed figure that transcends several of the boxes on the grid (See Appendix for examples and detailed directions).

Students continuously draw upon previous knowledge and experience about participating in tasks and continue to be challenged as the tasks progress in difficulty. Learners are able to grow and become linguistically and socially more adept at solving new communication dilemmas vis-à-vis the jig-saw tasks. Each new context allows the language learner to build new information or skills into previously existing knowledge structures. As Chandler (39) argues

> Classroom life is made up of a set of events [that] are linked together in some way. Although some aspects of life in classrooms become stable over time, other aspects evolve in the doing. While participants cannot know what events will specifically look like or require until they occur, there are general predictable elements of classroom life.

As jig-saw-type tasks or other one-way or two-way problem-solving tasks become an established part of classroom instructional routine, learners can become more and more aware of norms and expectations, rights and obligations, and roles and relationships that thus assist in their language development.

Although the jig-saw task might be considered an unreal or contrived task (Ahmed), the kind of language activity that evolves over time can theoretically aid the developing language learners in gaining more access to more language. In the real world of communicating with native speakers, learners may find themselves engaged in communication with an interlocutor who perhaps does not know the native language of the learner, or who is not accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers. The likelihood is diminished that communication with a native speaker simply ceases (Wolfson) because of communication breakdowns, at least on the part of the less-proficient language user. By allowing language learners

multiple opportunities to participate in analogous kinds of communication tasks across time such as the jig-saw task, they are more able to take control of the task actively by co-constructing it verbally and orienting themselves to the task demands as they begin to understand them and each other better.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have discussed the important roles of communicative competence and the negotiation of meaning. Current understandings of the goals for foreign language learning (e.g., Kramsch, 1987; Savignon, 1990) stress real functional use of the language beyond the formal classroom setting. Learners, according to current theories of language acquisition, need opportunities to use language in order to participate actively in the construction of conversations with native speakers of the languages they are learning. Within a communicative framework, the amount of formal grammar study that was once deemed important is no longer tenable (VanPatten). The jig-saw problem-solving task is but one means for allowing learners to interact meaningfully with one another in order to be involved actively in constructing, interpreting, making, and exploring new meaning, not only with and about the languages they are studying but also about themselves and their roles in the classroom, and in the language learning process itself (Marshall). (See Bunn and Seymore; Caycedo Garner, Rusch, and Domínguez; Dreke, Lind, and Schlubach-Rüping; and Nunan for more one-way and two-way, problem-solving type tasks.)

Language learners need multiple opportunities to interact with one another through analogous kinds of problem-solving speaking tasks in order to become better at doing them. In this way, students become engaged in an aspect of the cultural life of the foreign language classroom over time (Brooks, in press; Collins and Green). They learn what is expected, what is possible to do, and how to participate in the language learning process. As in the real world, people need multiple opportunities to make cookies in order to become proficient at making them. It does not happen in one fell swoop. Like parents who apprentice their children into making cookies, teachers need to apprentice their learners into solving the kinds of speaking and negotiating challenges they are likely to encounter outside the classroom while speaking with real native speakers of the languages they are learning.

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## Appendix

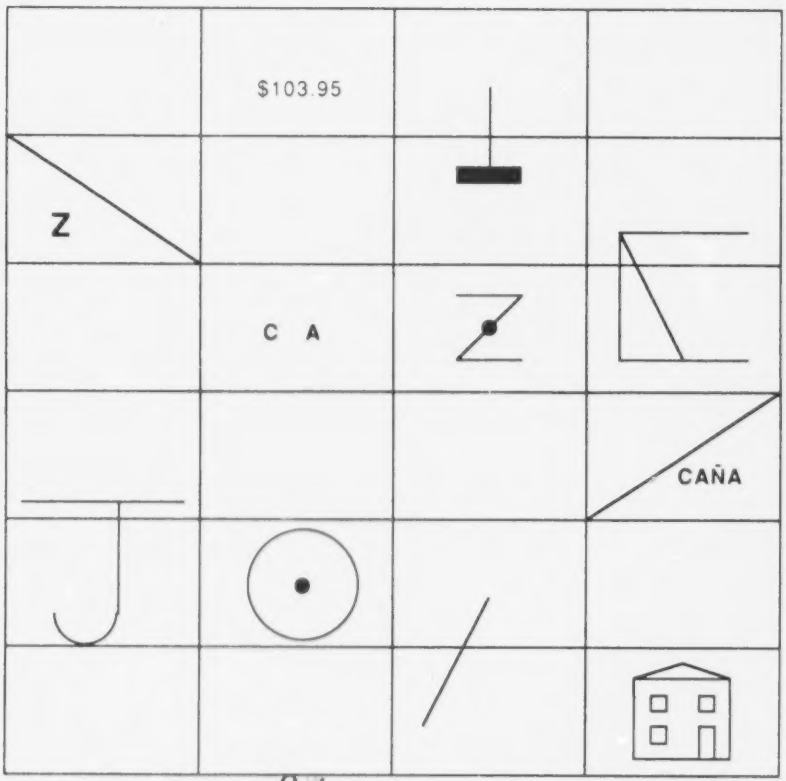
### Jig-Saw Task Directions

At the onset of this type of learning experience, each individual receives a grid with information on it. One person receives Form A and the other receives Form B. When superimposed, both forms comprise a complete (albeit abstract) diagram. The teacher then asks the students to talk to one another in the foreign language to find out how their part of the diagram is both different from and similar to that of their partner. Each partner needs to draw in or add any missing information. By the end of their conversation, they both should have replicas of the same master diagram.

The first time an instructor introduces this kind of problem-solving activity we suggest that it be done as a whole-class activity. The teacher might use an overhead projector to show both sides of the diagram, superimpose them to show how they form a complete diagram, and draw the students into a conversation about how they might go through solving the dilemma. Following whole-class activity, the teacher might let the students work in pairs, though they still may have many questions. This is to be expected. Over time, these procedural questions will diminish.

The goal of this kind of problem-solving speech activity is for the students to work together, listening to and utilizing each others' messages to arrive at mutual understanding and comprehension of the task at hand.

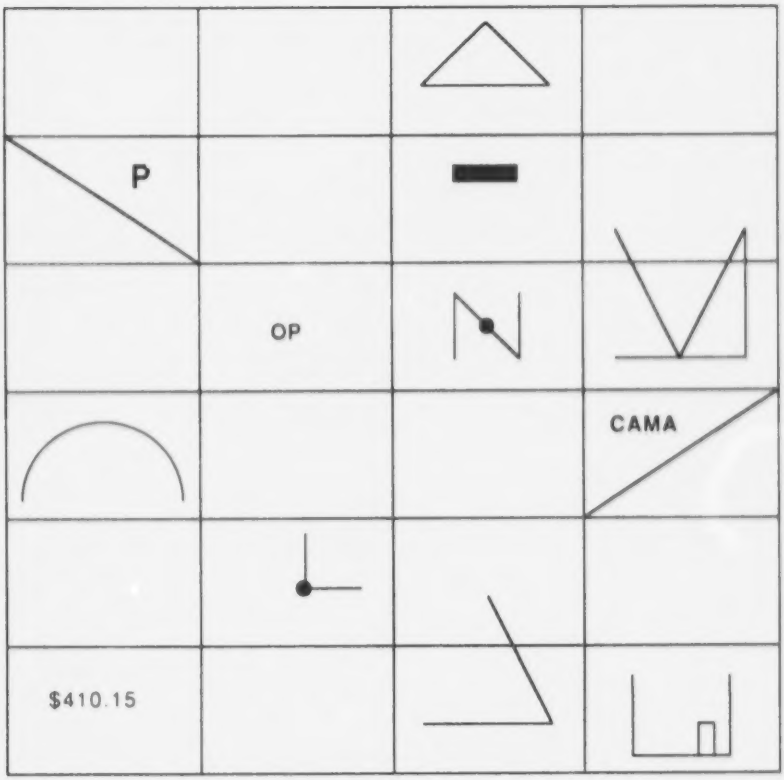
**FORM 1 A**



Participants take turns being the listener/receiver of their partner's information and thus work toward co-constructing the activity and the diagram through interpreting, expressing, and negotiating shared meanings orally.

Different versions of the task (for examples, see the following pages of this Appendix) can be distributed perhaps once a week or every other week over a session or semester, slowly adding new items based on newly introduced vocabulary or concepts. It is important to adjust each task to the learners in your classroom. Tasks should be challenging, not frustrating, and should parallel student ability. These kinds of task-based activities can be adjusted for any language learning level.

**FORM 1 B**



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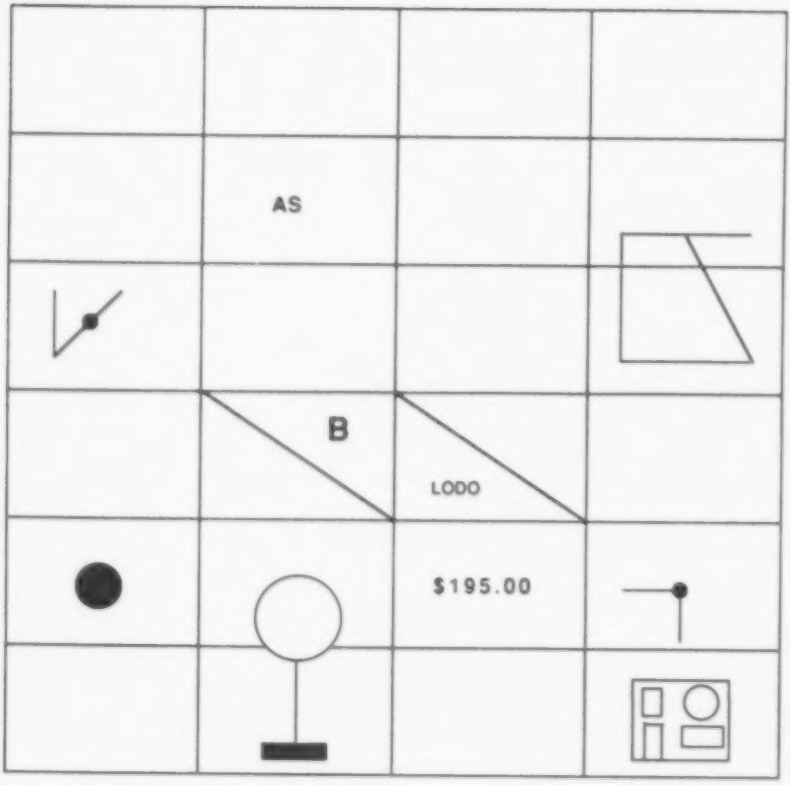

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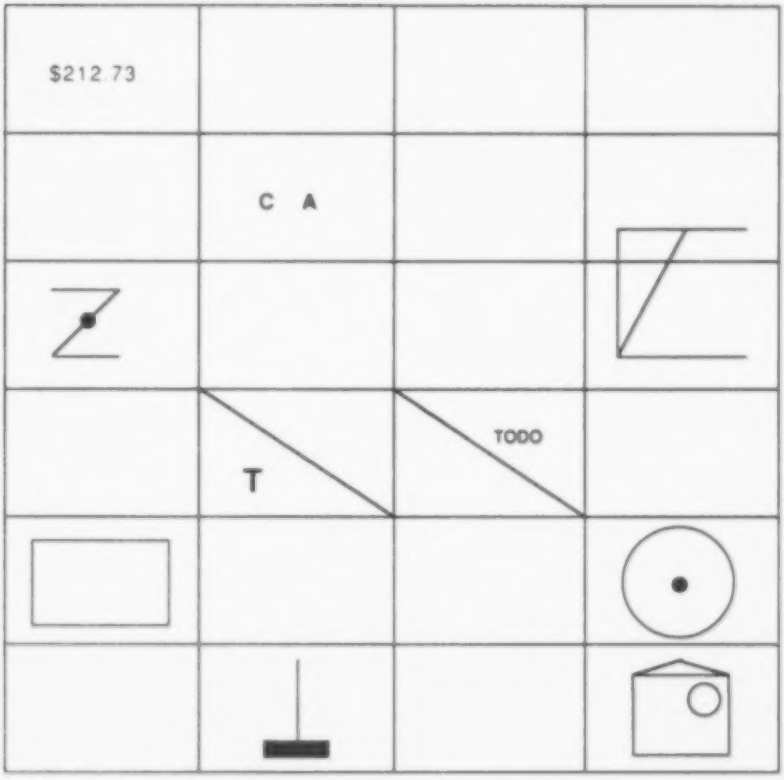

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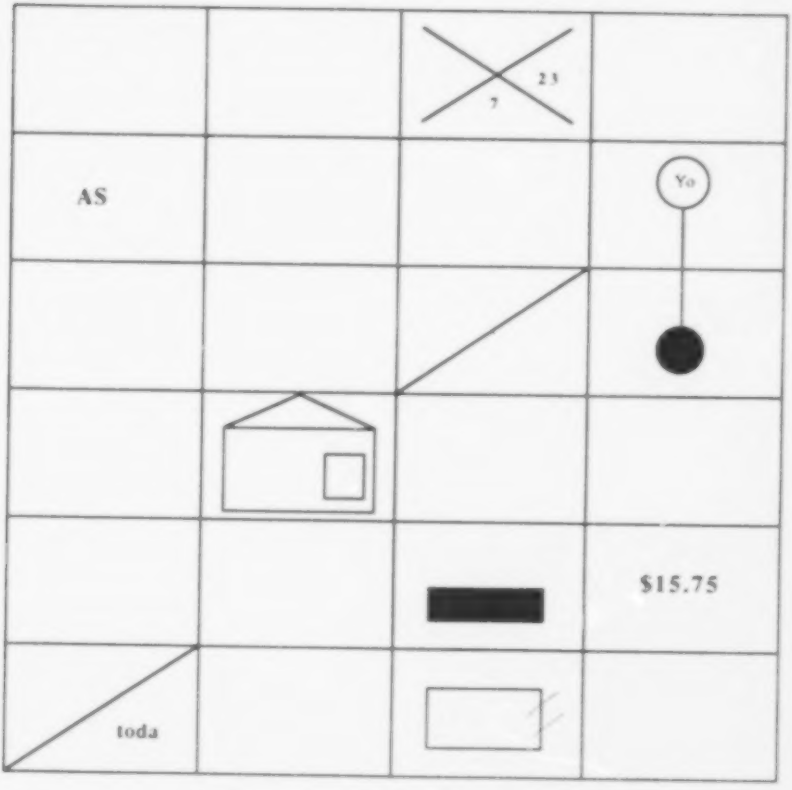

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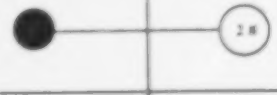
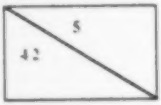
|  | |  | |
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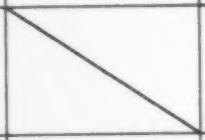
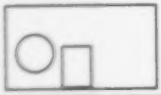
| | |  | |
| |  | | |
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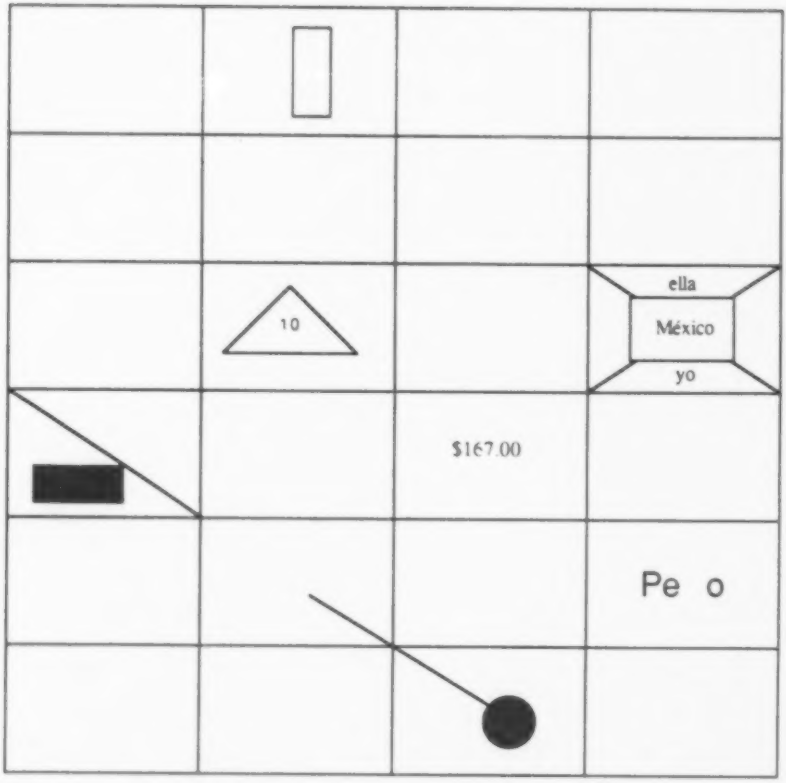

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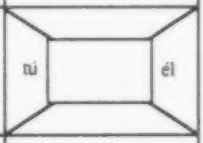
| | | |   |
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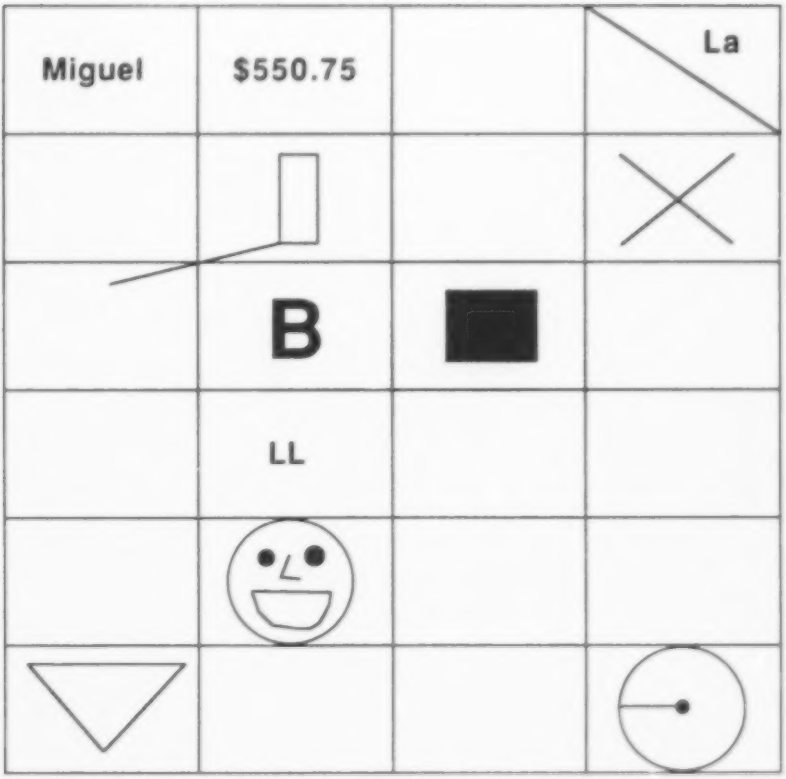

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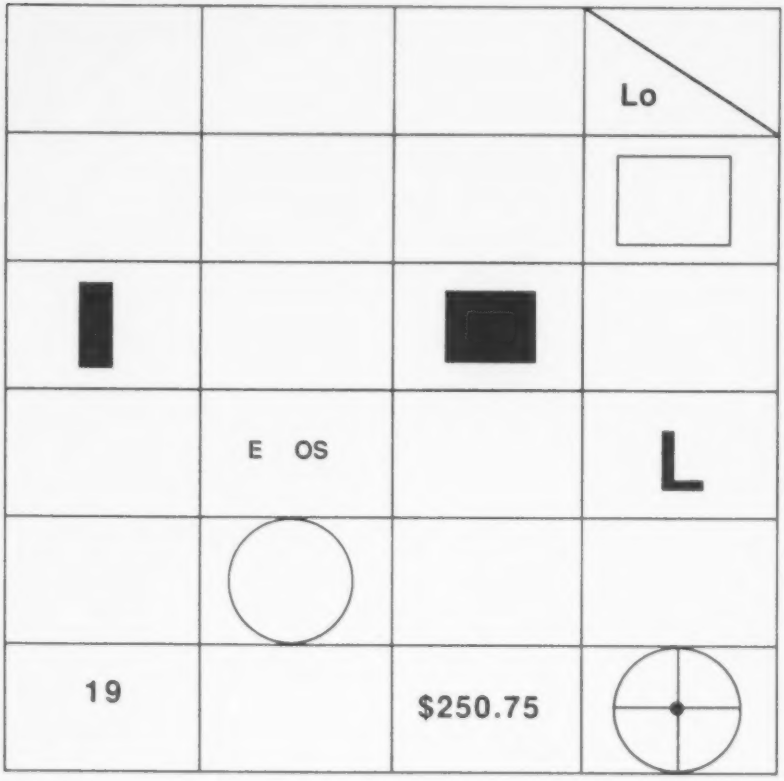

# 4

# Incorporating Higher-Order Thinking Skills in the Foreign Language Curriculum

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## Introduction

The development of higher-order thinking skills, also known simply as thinking skills, is a pervasive area of high educational interest, widespread in its present form since the work of Bloom (1956) and Gagne (1977). The current attention to curricular reform, accountability in the classroom, training of teachers, and teaching across the curriculum has served to increase our interest in helping students function beyond translating, repeating, and merely recalling in the foreign language classroom. The focus on process and proficiency in education, and specifically in foreign language teaching, has given thinking skills a central role in curriculum development.

A major goal of education is to assist students in becoming productive, responsible citizens who are able to think rationally, logically, and creatively. Cohen (1989) and Hunter (1991) point out the importance of providing students with the cognitive processes that will allow them to

cope with current and future situations and environments. Both emphasize the crucial role that education plays in restructuring our approach to learning in order to foster more effective and responsible relationships between individuals and their society. Educators from all disciplines must guide students beyond rote memorization. They need to afford students the opportunities to apply, synthesize, and evaluate situations in life. For example, given two jobs to choose from, individuals should not only be able to list the advantages and disadvantages of the employment options, but they should also be able to evaluate the impact their selection will have on them and others. Being able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate life's choices is not an automatic consequence of schooling and learning. Unfortunately, educators do not provide enough opportunities for learners to hypothesize or test theories based on data. Instead, our schools demand discrete-point information, usually out of context, where the student is not asked to draw conclusions or make judgments based on qualitative and quantitative facts. Students require practice with higher-order thinking in order to become proficient, just as they do when studying languages. Unfortunately, many of the demands of our educational system, including foreign language instruction, decrease rather than increase higher-order thinking.

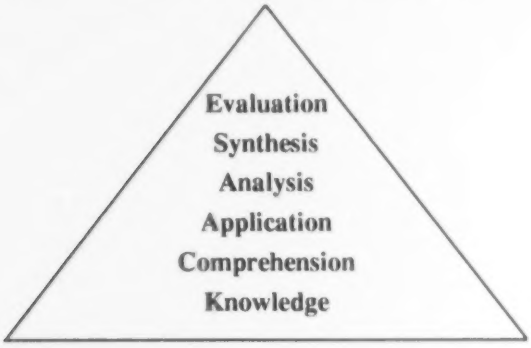
Foreign language education presently includes cultural understanding, language skills, and learning across the curriculum, making it ideally suited to emphasize higher-order thinking skills. The literature supports the notion that foreign language study is for everyone, not just the academically gifted. Additionally, research maintains that the teaching of higher-order thinking helps both high and low achievers (Ellis). The object of this paper is to provide working definitions of higher-order thinking skills, to explore their relationship to special programs and higher education, to list advantages of employing higher-order thinking skills in the second language classroom, and to suggest applications for foreign language education.

## Working Definitions of Higher-Order Thinking Skills

What are higher-order thinking skills? Bloom's taxonomy, 1956, one of the most ordered early approaches to defining thinking skills, continues to be one of the most widely used and copied models today. Bloom divided his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives into six levels (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**

**Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives**




**Knowledge** is the simplest level, involving recall or remembering and asking the learner to bring to mind appropriate specific material. Very little or no understanding of the material is necessary to do these tasks. **Comprehension** is seen as the lowest level of understanding the material, without necessarily relating the ideas. Here one is asked to compare, describe, classify, or translate. When one arrives at Bloom's level of **application,** however, most individuals agree that we are indeed talking about higher thinking skills. One uses information to deal with new situations or problems by solving, demonstrating, or transforming ideas or materials.

**Analysis** is the fourth level of the taxonomy. The individual is able to break down an idea or communication into its basic elements so that the relationship between ideas is clear. We ask students to detect, compare, contrast, or determine cause and effect relationships when we utilize analysis. In **synthesis,** the opposite behavior is required. The student is asked to put the elements and parts together to form a whole. At this level, the student creates a unique communication. **Evaluation** requires that both qualitative and quantitative judgments be made, and that students judge, validate, conclude, or appraise something.

Bloom's taxonomy is not the only model of thinking skills utilized by educators. Marzano et al. (1988) list eight levels or types of critical thinking skills, and Williams (1980) lists four cognitive-intellectual factors

and four affective-feeling factors related to complex thinking and behavior. Williams' (1980) cognitive-intellectual factors are **fluency**, **flexibility**, **originality**, and **elaboration**, areas long associated with the gifted. Williams (1980) and Chancellor (1991), though, believe that these factors can be found in all students.

Yet another model for cognitive behavior is the *Florida Taxonomy of Cognitive Behavior-- K-1 Form* (Soar et al.). The paradigm lists the first two levels of learning as (1) memory and (2) translation, where memory reflects no activity other than rote repetition of information in the exact form in which it was given. Translation identifies activities in which the individual changes the form of an idea, but not the idea itself. This could involve the translation of "2 + 2" into the words "two plus two," or "book" to *libro*. Here and in the work by Bloom, the focus of the learner is in duplicating previous material with relatively little, if any, thought about that information. While acquisition of knowledge and its recovery are important bases for learning, changes in thinking and growth take place only in an environment in which one manipulates the material at hand (Piaget).

Higher-order thinking involves much more than the reflection of information. It involves the manipulation, change, or readjustment of material or ideas as reflected in Piaget's concept of accommodation. The notion that we act upon ideas or reason is to be found in the work of Bloom, Gagne, Marzano, Williams, and others. All of these individuals offer systems that assist us in conceptualizing the idea or meaning of higher-order thinking. While each researcher's nomenclature varies from the other's, each generally describes a series of either more complex, or varying cognitive approaches to apply to the learning situation. The important outcome of much of the thinking skills work is the ability of individuals to use what they learn in new and real-life situations.

## Thinking Skills' Connection to Special Populations and Teacher Education

Several issues facing all areas of education, including foreign language instruction, must be addressed as part of the overall requisite for understanding and change in our approach to learning. One is the relationship between thinking skills and the education of special populations. As increasing numbers of foreign language programs develop in the

elementary schools, and as a consequence, a larger population of students possess interest and skills to study languages in middle, secondary, and higher education, we must acknowledge the needs of these students. Work continues concerning the academically gifted (Williams, for example). In fact, many of our efforts historically have focused on the brighter student. There is, however, increasing evidence that thinking skills benefit all students. While Williams focuses on creative behavior in the education of all children, others point out the advantages of teaching higher-order thinking to learning disabled and even mildly retarded children (Pogrow; Ellis). Research currently being conducted in Wake County, NC, indicates a promising relationship between foreign languages and at-risk students (Heining-Boynton and Williford).[1] Chancellor and Grossen emphasize the idea that reasoning strategies and higher-order skills may be successfully applied to special populations. Rather than exclude these students from foreign language education, it is essential to find ways to incorporate them into the mainstream of education.

Another issue requiring attention is the necessity to make changes in the methodological approaches and teaching styles in higher education (Hoch and Hart). Hunter stresses the importance of all academic disciplines to train students in thinking skills in order to cope with the future. A heavy responsibility rests with schools of education at colleges and universities. While thinking skills may be a part of the teacher preparation curriculum, preservice teachers often do not learn how to assess these skills in students. Stiggins, Griswold, and Wikelund discovered that teachers trained in the assessment of higher-order thinking are more likely to utilize thinking skills in the classroom. Woods offers continued support for this idea, and both articles point out practical approaches to assessment.

Whether delivering instruction to students with special needs, training future teachers, or teaching "average" kindergarten through college foreign language students, teachers need to integrate cognitive skills into the curriculum. The emphasis today in foreign language education should be on real communication, proficiency, and multicultural understanding. Failing to attend to these trends invites criticism by those who maintain that foreign languages are nothing more than verb conjugations and translations. What, then, are the advantages of incorporating higher-order thinking skills in the foreign language classroom, and how does a teacher achieve this kind of instruction?

## Advantages of Employing Higher-Order Thinking Skills in the Classroom

Many foreign language teachers complain that they have enough to do already by teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They argue that they do not have the time to teach higher-order thinking skills as well.

Foreign language educators need to regard teaching higher-order thinking as enhancing the four skills and culture. The students listen, speak, read, write, and learn about culture in a creative, meaningful way when these skills are taught cognitively. Also, incorporating higher-order thinking skills in the curriculum opens the door for employing content-based instruction. The examples in the following section of this article demonstrate work in an interdisciplinary setting to solve problems using the target language.

One need simply ask any teacher or administrator to discover that higher-order thinking skills and content-based instruction (or "teaching across the curriculum") remain on the list of priorities of school districts across the country. A goal of our educational system is to help develop citizens who can think through problems and make decisions based on the facts. Educators will also explain that another goal of education in the nineties is for students to see the interelatedness of subjects, and to ensure that skills learned in one subject are reinforced in another. During these times of program justification, foreign language educators demonstrate political savvy by infusing these skills and documenting for colleagues, school administrators, and parents their use in the foreign language classrooms. By demonstrating that second languages reinforce the regular curriculum, we make a strong case for the continuation of programs during times of financial exigency. By reinforcing the teaching of higher-order thinking skills, we illustrate the fact that language study is more than conjugating verbs and filling in discrete-point writing items. By studying a second language, we afford opportunities for real communication.

## Higher-Order Thinking Skills Activities: Kindergarten Through University

After centuries of practice, foreign language educators have become very good at dissecting verbs and deciphering the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. We have also become well-versed in

interpreting literary works. Some of these activities do indeed make use of higher-order thinking skills. What we need to improve upon is incorporating cognitive classroom activities that are meaningful, hands-on, concrete, and communicative, that teach and reach across the entire curriculum. Gone are the days of convincing the masses that it is enough to learn a language to be considered an educated person. The 1990s are pragmatic times, and it is important for foreign language educators to demonstrate that we are in the mainstream of American society. We can accomplish this by helping to increase cognitive skills while reinforcing other content areas.

The following suggestions introduce higher-order thinking skills in any curriculum from kindergarten through the university level.[2] These exercises can accompany any textbook or set of materials since they capitalize on universally taught concepts in a foreign language class. The only changes necessary would be adjustments for age appropriateness. Clearly, some activities can be used more easily (like *Sink or Float?*) in classes where content knowledge is developed concurrently, and others (like *Who's on First?*), because of their challenging cognitive nature, are age appropriate for the adult learner. What these exercises demonstrate is that language development is concurrent with higher-order thinking skill development.

The adage that "practice makes perfect" holds for higher-order thinking activities. Repeated practice helps learners of all ages perfect their skills to become better able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate.

Please note that several of the following activities employ more than one higher-order thinking skill, thus doubling or tripling the benefit for the student. Also note that none of these exercises require the learner to produce a complete sentence. Learners are able to function in these higher-order cognitive activities by responding often with only one word. Nevertheless, although all the following activities are appropriate for learners with a low level of proficiency, they can be appropriate and challenging for learners of all levels of language capability. The more advanced students supply more complete utterances or are able to use the basic requirements of each activity as a springboard for more language production. Higher-order thinking skills do not require high-level language ability.

**What's a Name Worth?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Higher-Order Thinking Skill: | Synthesis (Predicting, Hypothesizing) and Analysis (Verification) |
| Necessary Vocabulary: | Numbers 1-100 |
| Proficiency Level: | Novice |
| Content: | Mathematics |
| Content Ability: | Addition of a column of figures |
| Necessary Materials: | Alphabet chart with sequential values given to the letters |

This activity begins with the teacher's showing the students a chart (either on a transparency or a handout) with sequential values, in pesos, pesetas, francs, yen, etc., given to all the letters. For example:

| | |
|---|---|
| A = $1 | [...] |
| B = $2 | X = $24 |
| C = $3 | Y = $25 |
| D = $4 | Z = $26 |

After giving the students a copy of the alphabet values, the teacher asks the students to predict who has the most expensive name in the class, using either first or last names, and to write down their predictions. Then the students calculate the "value" of their own name. The teacher asks the students to raise their hands if their names add up to $10 francs, pesos, or whatever currency is used for the target culture. They should keep their hands raised if their names are valued at $15, then $20, etc. Once there remain only a few students whose hands are raised, the teacher asks the students if they would like to revise their predictions of who has the most expensive name. Next, the students with high name values state the total amounts of their names, and the class determines who predicted correctly. Finally, the teacher can put to use the higher-order thinking skill of analysis and assign students to verify the totals.

Another novice-level activity utilizing the same value chart can also incorporate cooperative learning. The teacher divides the students into groups of two or three and asks the students to hypothesize (the higher-order thinking skill task of synthesis) what target language word that they have learned is worth the most. The teacher assigns the tasks of recorder and tabulator to the group members. After a designated amount of time (depending on the age and $L_2$ knowledge of the learner), the groups report

to the class their most expensive word. The students discover which group determined the word with the highest value.

As a final activity, the groups share the steps they used to ascertain their most expensive word. This step affirms and broadens the higher-order thinking skill strategies of the students, especially for those students who had difficulty with the activity. They receive problem-solving techniques from their peers which they can make use of in the future.

Another point of departure with the same value chart is to give the students a value and have them determine a word that is worth that amount. Yet another point of departure is to change the letter values from the small amounts of \$1-\$26 to amounts like \$1,000-\$26,000. Since most target cultures have monetary systems that, because of inflation, use large numbers, this modification provides the students with creative ways of using larger numbers.

**Sink or Float?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Higher-Order Thinking Skill: | Synthesis (Predicting, Hypothesizing) |
| Necessary Vocabulary: | "to sink," "to float," numbers 1-20 |
| Proficiency Level: | Novice |
| Content: | Science |
| Content Ability: | Knowledge of the concepts sinking/floating, usually taught in the first grade |
| Necessary materials: | tub of water, aluminum foil, and "markers" (e.g., pennies, paper clips, beans, etc.) |

As a Total Physical Response activity, each student receives a six-inch square piece of aluminum foil. In the target language, the teacher gives directions and models for the students how to make a boat from the foil.[3] Then, the students predict if the boat will float or not. The teacher writes the prediction tally on the board, and then tests the boat in the water. (It should float!) Next, the students predict if a classmates' boat will float. The predictions are recorded on the board. The process is repeated with another student's boat.

Next, the teacher has the students predict how many markers (pennies, paper clips, etc.) the boat can hold before it sinks. The only vocabulary needed is the numbers. This works well as a group activity, with each group having its own water tub, boat, and supply of markers. Each group can have similar or different markers. After the experiment, the students report their findings to the entire class. The teacher inquires if their predictions about the number of markers the boats would hold were exact, close, or if they needed revision.

This activity can be carried further by exploring the scientific concept of weight and density and why certain bodies sink or float. The teacher displays a variety of objects that the students classify as those that sink and those that float. The students then verify their classifications by testing their hypotheses.

**Mix and Match**

| | |
|---|---|
| Higher-Order Thinking Skill: | Synthesis (Creating) |
| Necessary Vocabulary: | Any previously acquired vocabulary |
| Proficiency Level: | Novice (if the teacher accepts one- or two-word descriptions of a picture as constituting a story) or Intermediate |
| Content: | Any content area |
| Content Knowledge: | Depends on the content |
| Necessary materials: | Four to eight drawings or pictures that create a story |

Each student, or a group of two students, receives four to eight pictures. The pictures represent the vocabulary and concepts with which the students are familiar. These pictures are on individual pieces of paper so that they can be manipulated in a variety of sequences. The students put the pictures in whatever order they wish, and they then create a story. For example, if the students are learning the future tense, the teacher could provide pictures of places, foods, and sports, which are all categories of previously acquired vocabulary. The students then place the pictures in whatever order they wish, and invent a story in the future tense of what, for example, Jean-Claude and Philippe will do tomorrow.

As a speaking exercise, give the students five minutes to create a story. Then, the students orally share their story with a partner or with the teacher. The exercise can also be a homework assignment for which the students write their story based on the selected order of the pictures.

**"Inquiring Minds Want to Know"**

| | |
|---|---|
| Higher-Order Thinking Skill: | Synthesis (Imagining, Hypothesizing) and Evaluation (Judgment) |
| Necessary Vocabulary: | Descriptive Adjectives |
| Proficiency Level: | Novice |
| Content: | Language Arts<br>Descriptive Speech or Writing |
| Content Knowledge: | Meaningful verbs, adjectives, and nouns that allow the learner to expresses likes and dislikes |
| Necessary Materials: | A picture of a person or animal |

The students see a picture of a person or animal. The students hypothesize the answers to four questions in the target language. Sample questions include: What is her personality? What does she like to eat? What does she like to do in her spare time? Where does she go on vacation? Who is her favorite musician?

Each student creates a persona for the picture. Novice-level students can answer the questions with one-word responses. Advanced students construct more complex descriptions. The task of going beyond what they see in the picture affords the students the opportunity to develop a character.

This activity can be taken to an even higher level thinking skill in the target language. The students employ the highest thinking skill of evaluation when they are asked to make a judgment about the person. For example, one student may say that the male in the picture is a cook. The teacher then asks the student if the person is a good cook, and if so, how does the student know. Assessing value, making judgments, and formulating reactions based on personal experience or available facts, persuading, and problem-solving all involve the most complex higher-order thinking skill, evaluation.

**Who's On First?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Higher-Order Thinking Skill: | Evaluation (Problem-solving) |
| Necessary Vocabulary: | Geometric shapes, colors, and numbers from 1-20 |
| Proficiency Level: | Novice |
| Content: | Mathematics |
| Content Ability: | Recognition of geometric shapes and word problem solving |
| Necessary Materials: | Handout with a word problem |

Activities such as this allow students to work alone or with a partner. Problems like the following come from many sources and are easily adapted into the target language. As is evident in the following exercise, only a small amount of language knowledge is necessary to be successful. What matters is the use of the higher-order thinking skill of evaluation.

The teacher gives the students a copy of a problem in the target language. The students work for 5 minutes on a solution and report back to the class. Following is a sample problem:

> The distant kingdom of Azalia has recently issued three new coins. Each coin has a different value (17, 36, or 55 pengos), a different color (olive green, maroon, or turquoise), and a different shape. If you randomly select a coin, it will be either olive green, a circle, or the 17-pengo piece. If you randomly select another coin, it will be either turquoise, a triangle, or the 36-pengo piece. The triangular coin is worth more than the square coin. What color and what shape are the different values of coins? (*Games Magazine Big Book of Games II*, 53)

Problems such as the one illustrated furnish students with the opportunity to resort to the highest level thinking skill while requiring a minimal knowledge of foreign language. These activities require small amounts of class time, and they benefit the learner by making the language meaningful, concrete, hands-on, and contextualized. For the school administration and parents, similar activities demonstrate that foreign languages provide important skills needed by all students that reinforce the regular curriculum.

## Evaluation

Teaching higher-order thinking skills provides a rich arena for creative evaluation. Often students who are shy or struggling in the foreign language class are able to perform well when they are given a task that requires analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. Therefore, students experience success when they can compare and contrast, or hypothesize and predict, even if their responses are not language perfect. The goal of the exercises is to place language in a useful context so that students gain or improve necessary life skills.

Should the use of higher-order thinking skills be evaluated? If we believe that there is more to language learning than reciting verb forms, then the answer is "yes." How, then, can a teacher evaluate cognitive skills? One way is to include in the grading a determination if the learner is making an effort to utilize and improve usage of higher-order thinking skills. For example, is the student estimating with increasing precision? Is the student able to compare and contrast? It is suggested that teachers use a grading criterion that assesses learners individually, determining their thinking skill at the beginning and at the end of the class. Teachers must recognize that the most important, long-lasting outcome of their class is not the correct form of the third person plural of the present perfect tense. What does matter is whether the learner can communicate an original, meaningful idea in a comprehensible manner.

Students making progress with higher-order thinking skills in the foreign language classroom deserve to have this fact reflected in their report card grades. As foreign language educators, we must celebrate the students who demonstrate classifying, generalizing, and problem-solving techniques in our classes.

## Conclusions

Like the proficiency movement, teaching higher-order thinking skills is not a fad. Since the 1950s, educators have employed techniques that encourage students to perform at more than the recall level. Teaching higher-order thinking skills takes no extra time from the classroom instruction since listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language are being reinforced during thinking skills activities. What thinking skills do necessitate on the part of teachers is their commitment to insure that classroom activities go beyond the knowledge level. Having

students name objects and recite verb forms is not enough. Employing higher-order thinking skills affords students the opportunity to experience a second language as a useful tool, a road to meaningful communication.

## Notes

1. For the purpose of the Wake County study, an "at-risk" student is defined as one who is at risk of failing a subject.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all of these activities have been passed down from unknown sources so that it is impossible to credit the originator.
3. Simply push the foil together to make a canoe-like structure.

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# 5
# The Advanced Conversation Course

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## Introduction: Newly Recognized Needs

The advanced-level conversation class is a long-time staple in most language programs. We have long recognized that most students did not develop sufficient proficiency in the lower-level language program and that more time and contact with the target language were required. Even more troubling, however, has been our concurrent awareness that most students still have not developed a fully functional level of oral proficiency after they have completed the advanced conversation course either and that yet further time and contact are needed. As a profession we have in many instances been attempting to create more opportunities to develop proficiency in a variety of ways. In many institutions we have revamped our lower-level programs to make them far more communicative in approach and we have integrated oral testing. In some cases we have extended our lower-division sequence, adding courses for "false beginners," native speakers, and other populations. We may have added courses in language for special purposes (business, medicine, criminal justice, education, etc.), and there may be additional courses at the end of the lower-level sequence that include literature, conversation, and/or composition. In some instances these program modifications may have facilitated enhanced

growth in student proficiency, especially in the area of the more elusive oral proficiency. Nevertheless, because our goals are high, we continue to find that many students exiting the lower-division level are still in the Intermediate proficiency range on the ACTFL scale. Therefore we recognize that many students begin their upper-division courses at the Intermediate level and must advance from this point to the desired or targeted end-point for the program. In our own particular context, that goal is the Advanced level, the level that will permit them to pass the Texas Oral Proficiency Test and our own END test, a graduate-program screening test.

In recent years the profession has examined thoroughly the entire issue of exit-level proficiency for majors. We have used as baseline data John Carroll's (1967) study which found that many majors exited with the equivalent of Advanced-level proficiency, and we have conducted new studies to compare current results with Carroll's. For example, ACTFL's 1980's Texas Project reported that many majors were exiting with Intermediate-High proficiency. The adequacy and desirability of this exit level was debated, but the debate shortly became moot. The certifying agency for teachers, the Texas Education Agency, determined that the Texas Oral Proficiency Test (TOPT) was to be required of all candidates for teacher certification in Spanish and French beginning in 1991, and the Advanced level was set for passing. Because many Spanish majors are or will be seeking a teaching certificate and/or admission into an M.A. program, this hurdle affects many students. The TOPT is a simulated oral proficiency interview test which was created by the Center for Applied Linguistics. The END test is also a function-based simulated oral proficiency test. The immediate effect of this decision was to oblige all Texas colleges and universities to re-examine their language development sequences in these languages to determine how to provide optimum opportunities for students to reach the Advanced level of proficiency. Institutions with a high fail rate would lose their certification programs. In addition we needed to establish a mechanism for screening students at entry into the teacher certification program, presumably at the beginning of their junior year, in order to counsel them regarding their proficiency level at that time and suggest the desired steps for attaining the Advanced level. Finally, language departments would also need to define a process for students to re-enter the advanced oral communication course cycle after not passing the test.

At the authors' institution these issues were considered early in the TOPT process when the test was first discussed and prior to its being mandated and developed. The implications were clear, and the test was already beginning to have positive backwash in that it was causing language faculties to become more aware of their students' progress in oral proficiency. As a first step, the authors reorganized the advanced conversation course around rhetorical functions and structured its activities to maximize individual student participation in the language. Oral testing was initiated in the form of pre-tests, in-class tests, and post-tests. Finally, the course was restructured to allow students to take the course twice for credit. Now a new third advanced-level course is being formally added to the oral communication sequence. Thus the contact hours embodied in the five-course lower-division sequence and the three upper-level courses focused on oral skills total 420, moving us closer to the number cited by Liskin-Gasparro (1983) for achieving an Advanced-level rating in Spanish. Many crucial aspects of students' growth in the language were discussed and the advanced conversation program described in the material following has evolved over a period of seven years and continues to undergo refinement. In general, the design is original, as a review of the literature revealed few articles and no texts appropriate to the task. Kaplan (1984), Dodd (1992) and Gutiérrez (1990) were among the few who have addressed the advanced conversation course; and all have noted that there are few studies and fewer materials.

## Defining The Audience

The population in any language class always has the potential of being quite varied. Students advance at individual rates in language learning, and with different types of exposure to the language, they develop different strengths. Thus, by the time students take an advanced conversation course, variation among them is likely to be quite pronounced. In addition, however, one encounters the non-native speaker with no exposure to the language outside the school setting, the native who has been abroad, the semi-native speaker (one who understands the language fairly well but speaks little), the native speaker of regional dialect, the fluent native speaker, and many other profiles. There are also language majors and minors, but in a typical program, two-thirds of the students may be non-majors. Many students today enroll in advanced conversation classes

because they want to develop a level of skill in the language appropriate to the work context in which they hope to use it.

Given the increasing awareness that many students will need several course cycles to reach the Advanced level, some institutions are facilitating students' repeating the conversation course for credit. Therefore in those institutions there will be students in the class for the first time and students who are repeating in order to advance further. This circumstance dictates a high degree of flexibility of course material so students can benefit from participating in the course again without having to repeat the same topics, readings, listening activities, etc.

There will also be the usual variation of personal characteristics among the students, especially in two particularly important dimensions. We have noted that some are very well read and widely traveled while others have limited information and experience. The ability of students to organize their thoughts logically and clearly also varies extensively. These characteristics affect their ability to speak well in their first language, too, but may have greater impact in the second language. To the extent that a student has not yet developed adequate access to information and ideas or effective processes for organizing his or her thoughts to present to others, these aspects of functioning will need to be developed in the advanced conversation class along with vocabulary, grammar, and other features of oral performance.

To all these variables we add the many different uses to which students plan to put their language skills. Some students envision social uses; others, social service. Some plan personal use; others, applications for business and professional career fields. These multifaceted views of our students present a complex context indeed for course development. Also at issue is how we can best make use of the knowledge students themselves bring to the class. The diverse backgrounds they bring are an advantage in vocabulary transfer and in the pooling of general knowledge, as any concepts they possess in one language are more easily transferred to another. Their expertise affects the structure of the course in terms of focusing on methods and patterns of discourse for expressing what they know and need to convey rather than limiting the discourse to set items or topics which may be irrelevant to any given group of students. At lower levels of proficiency we may all speak of common themes using basic vocabulary. At higher levels of proficiency and especially with career applications we need opportunities to develop and use vocabulary and functions applied to our own areas of preparation. Since advanced

conversation students are already involved in their majors, they are well able to develop highly specialized applications for the language.

## Defining the Objectives

A course that would attempt to meet the needs of the students described above would of necessity have a number of objectives. The authors have chosen development of rhetorical functions as the primary organizer and objective, and the topics to which they are applied may vary. The first function covered in the course is description, and subsequently students narrate in past, present, and future time. While there are some common introductory themes with each function to focus initially on unified vocabulary, the bulk of the activities with each function draw upon topics suggested by students. Thus in much the same way the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview focuses on interviewee interests and expertise, the course facilitates students' developing vocabulary and applying functional skills at successive levels of difficulty to the areas of their own interests, experiences, and career goals. As Omaggio (1986) notes, the ACTFL Guidelines are ideally suited to organizing instruction because they are progressive in nature. Additional functions include defining, explaining, expressing and supporting opinions, hypothesizing, negotiating and tailoring, focusing on the advanced and superior-level tasks as defined by Guntermann and Phillips (1982), and Wilkins (1976). Figure 1, "Targeting the Advanced-level Speaker," provides an indirect summary of all the objectives for the course. The goal is to enable each student to be "on target" at the level indicated or to surpass it and be above-level if his/her skills permit that degree of progress. The chart provides students and instructor alike a comprehensive but succinct way to keep in mind the major elements that comprise successful communication. It does not, however, address the issue of balance or relative weighing of the elements. In keeping with Higgs and Clifford (1982), the authors assert that completing the task (function) is the most important element and that for the Advanced-level speaker grammar and vocabulary are the most vital tools.

There is great variety in the degrees of success with which students accomplish these tasks, as one would expect in a group of upper-level students with different backgrounds and proficiency levels. Thus another objective of the course is to provide for flexible and continuous growth. Those who will pursue another cycle in the course will have an additional opportunity to improve performance in any areas that were initially weak.

**Figure 1.**

## Targeting the Advanced-level Speaker

| FEATURES OF PERFORMANCE | BELOW-LEVEL | ON-LEVEL | ABOVE-LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|
| FUNCTION | -minimal completion of task<br>-not completed successfully | -completed as stated<br>-clear description, narration, explanation, etc. | -embellished<br>-abstract<br>-general<br>-professional |
| CONTENT | -discrete sentences<br>-minimal information<br>-disorganized<br>-disjointed<br>-unclear | -appropriate<br>-sufficient<br>-complete<br>-clear message<br>-paragraph length<br>-some connectedness | -extensive organization<br>-introduction<br>-logical sequence<br>-closure<br>-extensive detail<br>-exceptional linkage and transition |
| VOCABULARY | -vague references (*something, things like that,* etc.)<br>-English<br>-blanks<br>-misformed words<br>-misuse of words | -adequate<br>-circumlocutes successfully<br>-some regionalisms possible<br>-most word correctly formed | -varied<br>-not redundant<br>-all in target language<br>-elegant<br>-professional<br>-abstract<br>-some low-frequency items<br>-precise words |

## Targeting the Advanced-level Speaker *(Continued)*

| FEATURES OF PERFORMANCE | BELOW-LEVEL | ON-LEVEL | ABOVE-LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|
| GRAMMAR | -many errors<br>-confusion of preterit and imperfect<br>-mostly present tense regardless of forms needed<br>-many agreement errors | -some errors<br>-past,present and future (immediate) verbs handled well<br>-fairly accurate<br>-forms appropriate to task<br>-subjunctive errors | -few errors<br>-no patterned errors<br>-complex sentences<br>-complex verb structrues<br>-accurate<br>-has structures necessary for hypothesis and persuasion |
| COMPREHENSIBILITY | -needs a "sympathetic listener" | -generally appropriate pronunciation, intonation, enunciation, volume | -elegant courtesy formula<br>-uses target cultural references |
| SOCIOCULTURAL FIT | -lacks courtesy formulas<br>-uses *tú* and *usted* inappropriately | -tact<br>-courtesy<br>-sensitivity<br>-generally appropriate register | -elegant courtesy formula<br>-uses target cultural references |
| CONSISTENCY | -peaks into needed level but doesn't sustain<br>-never achieves level | -sustains level with only rare lapses | -peaks into next level<br>or<br>-sustains next level |
| FLUENCY | -hesitates frequently<br>-rephrases frequently<br>-very brief | -generally flows<br>-occasional hesitation<br>-occasional rephrasing<br>-moderate quantity of speech for task | -exceptional flow<br>-exceptional detail<br>-exceptional quantitiy |

The instructors do not assume that each student will master each function during the course, but rather that he/she will simply attempt the function several times and improve in handling the task or the function.

A third objective is to facilitate students' improving grammatical accuracy. Grammar is normally handled on an as-needed basis. A few functions clearly embody an aspect of grammar, past tenses for narration, for example, but many do not. In those cases the instructor diagnoses student need during performance and provides information on areas that students are mishandling, much in the same way we may deal with grammar in function-oriented composition courses. Verb tenses and moods are clearly the elements most often presented. However, in many cases, the instructor is elaborating information some students may already possess: the formal rules of grammar. The key is that for many students who know rules there is still a gap between what they "know" and what they say. Thus a key objective in the course is to help students to empower their own internal monitor to a greater degree so they can detect and correct their own errors. Some activities are especially focused to this end and grammar is used frequently as a brief advanced organizer for oral activities, recognizing the importance of frequent attention to accuracy at this level (Munsell and Cain, 1981).

As noted previously, vocabulary varies widely in the course as students present and discuss their own ideas and experiences and topics pertaining to their own professional preparation. The authors may or may not use a single topic focus to develop a function. For example, description may be introduced by focusing on cities around the world, with each student presenting one city; but the emphasis may then shift to topics from other aspects of description--persons, structures, landscapes, interiors, etc. Thus, only a limited common vocabulary is taught. Rather, students are required to participate extensively in developing new vocabulary pertinent to topics each will introduce. Significant vocabulary growth is an objective of the course, however, and is facilitated by the greatly varied lexicon used by the class as students present and discuss topics of their own choosing.

Thus, vocabulary acquisition is helped in two major ways: the vocabulary journal and the vocabulary presented in class. The vocabulary journal is an important requisite for the class, as is mining each day's discussion for valuable vocabulary to list on the board for all to add to the journal. Typically each student or group must emphasize a few new

vocabulary items daily for the class in general, and each student must keep a journal of new words in context throughout the course. This flexibility of lexicon is invaluable in a course which students repeat. If a fixed vocabulary were used every semester, the student repeating would benefit little. If the same common topics were used each semester, students would acquire few new words when they repeat the course. By allowing students to select most of the topics, a richness and variability of themes and thus lexicon is ensured. In addition to focusing on specific vocabulary, however, students also develop the ability to circumlocute successfully, a requisite for the Advanced-level speaker.

At this level, content is extremely important. Students are beyond the stage of telling what they ate for breakfast and are presenting, explaining, and discussing content of a more professional and sophisticated nature. They will discuss politics, history, business, fine arts, health, philosophy, etc. Thus a crucial objective of the course is to interact with students in identifying key elements for a particular topic and in organizing them in a way that will ensure effective communication. In the course students work with content in a concrete to abstract progression, first dealing with the function applied to daily-life topics and then advancing to more abstract and formal applications. Further, students need help in linking their ideas, in making smooth transitions from one point to another.

The authors utilize some topics specifically for teaching metacognition but also raise thinking-skills issues throughout the course. We constantly analyze with students what elements they may have neglected to include, how they have sequenced their points, and how they have derived their conclusions. This area of thinking skills is crucial, for clear organization will help a student to communicate despite errors, whereas accurate language without clear ideas communicates inadequately and remains at the Intermediate-High level. Thus this area of emphasis is particularly relevant for native speakers who may already speak well but have had no opportunity to focus intensively on identification, organization, and linkage of ideas in oral communication.

Another major emphasis in the course is to facilitate students' extended speech. In their first years of language study students generally function in a mini-dialogue format, progressing from 3-5 exchanges to somewhat longer sequences. In this course students must learn to sustain language over a longer time frame and to function extemporaneously, handling the varied and sometimes unpredictable responses of their peers. Fluency

frequently is defined as lack of hesitation, but at this level, that type of fluency is assumed and greater length of presentation or interaction becomes a focus. Thus sustaining and extending speech without experiencing linguistic breakdown is an important goal. Without this consistency the student cannot maintain the desired proficiency level. In the authors' course, these abilities are crucial for students who must go on to the Texas Oral Proficiency Test. Without developing these skills students will not pass the test. Thus students are asked to present a number of topics of a complexity sufficient to require several minutes of discourse.

Achieving comprehensibility is another objective of the advanced conversation/oral communication course. Comprehensibility is affected by many variables, such as pronunciation, intonation, enunciation, organization and selection of content, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and a clear idea of how the particular function in question is best carried out. Thus each of these elements is a partial focus of the course, and comprehensibility is an overriding objective. The Advanced-level speaker must be understood by anyone, and that indeed is the goal for the students. Through the use of strategic questions by peers and by the instructor and through self-analysis of tapes of their own work students are led to discover and remediate areas of weakness.

Acceptable socio-cultural functioning is also a goal for student performance in the class. Using *tú* and *usted* appropriately, choosing and maintaining the appropriate register, injecting expected courtesy formulas, and avoiding themes or positions which offend are important. Students are also encouraged to include appropriate cultural allusions and idioms. Again the use of strategic questions by the instructor can lead students to analyze whether they and their peers sounded courteous and appropriately formal or informal.

Thus in contrast to the usual advanced conversation course, then, this version is not topic-focused, and has no set vocabulary, except in special instances. In one semester, for example, the course was given a world geography focus and all the functions were applied to this theme, with each student discussing a particular place. The student would situate and describe the place, explain the consequences of climate and resources, narrate the history, explain important scientific and/or technological enterprises, etc. The course targets higher level skills, more formal contexts, specific functions, and sustained speech. The conversation course initially evolved in an era when first- and second-year courses were largely grammar-oriented and students needed the opportunity to con-

verse, perhaps for the first time. In some incarnations they talked about everyday life, as is now done in first-year courses. In others, they conversed about current events or the history of the target culture, a focus that would now be deemed appropriate but too limited. Thus given the nature of the extensive modifications made over time to lower-level courses, upper-level courses clearly have required rethinking. In order to deliver an Advanced-level speaker (or better) at the end of the sequence of study, the program must be well articulated throughout to provide a seamless continuum of developmental opportunities.

## Structuring the Class

While ten to fifteen is generally viewed as an ideal number of students for a conversation/oral communication class, the popularity of this class has precluded such a low class enrollment. Close to seventy percent of the students who take this course come from non-language majors and are individuals who see second language skills can be invaluable to them in their work. Thus the class is usually taught with twenty-five students and sometimes with thirty-five. However, by means of the extensive use of pair and small-group activity formats and of peer teaching, crucial student participation and growth are maximized. Further, students all have the opportunity to develop new functioning styles (Oxford, Ehrman, Lavine, 1990). Through the use of groups, adaptations to preferred learning styles can be made and/or non-preferred styles can be developed. For example, those students who typically prefer to work alone will work closely with their "audience," and those who have always worked only in conjunction with others will now have increased responsibility for independent presentation.

The course is taught in a room with round tables for four to six students each, a layout which facilitates constant and easy interaction. At times all the groups are doing the same activity, at other times each group may have a distinct focus. In all cases an entire group wrap-up is essential to provide closure to ideas, to highlight new vocabulary and to reinforce the direction of the group activities. It is during the wrap-up phase that instructor and students can refer to the objectives stated in Figure 1 and determine areas of strength and weakness that day. Occasionally students are called upon to lead or present to the entire group, although this feature is usually incorporated later in the semester when students are generally more comfortable about speaking.

A key concern in such a class is time. Each activity with its wrap-up takes 20 to 30 minutes in a class of 25 students, as each person in a group of five, for example, needs multiple opportunities to interact. In addition, time is needed for peer teaching. Using an instrument like Figure 1, students can give input to each other about the elements listed, as can the instructor who is floating from group to group, but that input also requires time. Referring to the chart they can reflect upon grammar, choice of vocabulary, organization of ideas, etc., in each presentation. Thus only six activities can be completed in a week with just three class hours, and this number is reduced according to the number of individuals who interact with the whole group as opposed to the small group. Presentation to the class by individuals is a mode the authors generally reserve for whole-group wrap-up of small-group activities. Thus it is possible to cover about one function a week, excluding the time needed for evaluation. Each thirty-minute segment includes five minutes for preparation, fifteen to twenty minutes of group work, and five minutes for wrap-up.

## Evaluation

Evaluation is complex in a class in which an instructor may have students on a variety of levels but also some students, even many students, who exceed the level of proficiency that might be termed normal for the course level. Thus it is helpful to weight heavily the progress a student makes in the course rather than performance measured against an absolute criterion. Frequent input about each student's performance in relation to the objectives is valuable and even essential to ensure this progress. In part the input arises from informal evaluation by peers and the instructor in the small group-setting. The authors provide a weekly grade, however, using a portfolio concept borrowed from the teaching of composition. If students are asked to record some portion of their work at their group table every class day, they can be asked to submit one of these topics from their "portfolio" each week for a grade. The instructor typically places a recorder on each table and indicates what and when students are to record while they present to their peers. In this case, the form illustrated in Figure 2 is used to provide a grade with written input to the student. Little special accommodation is made in assignments, pairing, evaluation, etc., for the students who already possess a high level of proficiency. They are prevented from intimidating or dominating the students with more traditional backgrouds by the format in which each student must present,

but these individuals are used as resources and are strategically positioned at the various tables.

**Figure 2.**

**Escala para calificar el habla III**

(Level form)

Nombre:_____ Clase:_____ Promedio:_____

Fecha:_____ Actividad:_____

| | A+ | A | B | C | D | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| La comunicación--el propósito logrado (C) hasta la presentación creativa y expresiva (A) | 15 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 10 |
| La precisión gramatical (especialmente _____) | 20 | 18 | 16 | 14 | 12 | 10 |
| La fluidez y cantidad | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| El vocabulario (adecuado--C--hasta usar el nuevo--A) | 15 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| La pronunciación (se comprende --C--hasta como nativo--A) | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 |
| La coherencia/cohesión | 15 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| La calidad del contenido | 15 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 9 | 7 |

**APUNTES**:

(González Pino, 1989)

Students are also asked to provide a pre-course language sample. The authors use a taped pre-test of seven functions from throughout the course that students record the first day of class. The tape provides an important baseline from which to measure progress and gives the instructor an idea of how best to help each student. Then, in addition, students take a taped oral mid-term and final, each of which also focuses on the six to seven functions just covered. These tests are taped as well in order to facilitate the kind of careful feedback that would be impossible with a live performance, as students at this level say too much too fast for the instructor to focus on all the elements indicated in the chart at once. These tests may also have vocabulary and/or grammar components, as the instructor wishes, but the oral performance is 80% of the grade. All the tests are typically handled in the language lab to facilitate simultaneous recording.

## A Typical Lesson Cycle

The instructor introduces the function with a warm-up activity. The function "Explaining" will be used here as an example of a typical lesson cycle. Initially students explain common procedures from daily life. For the first activity all groups might do the same task. Students in groups or pairs prepare to explain how to call long distance and seek help from the instructor and dictionaries while they work. Then they present their ideas to the class, perhaps with one member of each group outlining the steps they developed. The instructor would lead a comparison and analysis of the various versions for adequacy and vocabulary, perhaps ending with an amalgamized version on the board. Next each group could be given a different task but with all tasks still related to a familiar context, such as the university. Possible procedures to explain could include registering in person, registering by telephone, requesting a grade change, checking out a library book, obtaining a parking sticker, purchasing textbooks. Once again each group's procedure could be presented and discussed by the entire class. Then each individual in each group of five could be given a procedure to prepare from a pool of five items, such as baking a cake, changing a tire, arranging flowers, planting a tree, etc. Every group has the same five items. At the next class each person would present his/her procedure to the small group. Following this step, a number of variations are possible. Students could be scrambled into new groups to present the same explanation to new peers, one person for each of the five items could

present to the class, or everyone could present to the class, facilitating a comparison and amalgam of the five versions of each item. To conclude, each student could prepare a different explanation of his/her choice from a list, followed by the same in-class options for presentation and discussion.

Thus there have been opportunities for both extemporaneous and prepared speech in the lesson cycle, both of which are very important to the student. Prepared speech contributes to conscious controlled growth and affords security to the student, and extemporaneous speech leads to eventual success in many real-life settings and on formal tests such as the TOPT. Finally, the function can be continued with additional mini-cycles like the previous one relating to other aspects of the function, such as explaining concepts (democracy, love, education, etc.) and/or explaining difficult procedures and processes (the principle of aerodynamics, passing through the locks at the Panama Canal, how the solar system works, etc.), with choices based on the individual expertise of the students. The use of these mini-cycle segments provides the opportunity to attend to learning styles variation in the different segments (Mosston and Ashworth 1990); in some instances students work independently and in others cooperatively. Further, in addition to the obvious listening and speaking practice in class, students have access to tapes of native speakers carrying out the functions and brief readings that serve as examples of the functions. Both types of examples are provided in order to reach both visual and auditory learners as identified by Saunders (1987). However, the examples serve only as models of the function itself, since in many instances the topic with which an individual student applies the function may be different. The length of this cycle makes it clear how difficult it is to complete a function in a week's time. Because time is such a concern, listening, reading, and writing materials are kept to a minimum. The authors have found that the amount of such materials used in typical theme-based courses distracts from the speaking goal and the amount of time students have to develop presentations.

## Results

Comparing the rating sheets for pre-test tapes to those for final examination tapes reveals a broad spectrum of progress in all students. All advance in vocabulary, and most improve in grammatical accuracy. Improvement in the ability to complete the task or function is obvious for

all but the initially Superior-level students. Most are more fluent and more confident, and their communication is better organized. Their speech is consistently more comprehensible, and their strategies have improved. They self-correct and circumlocute more successfully (except the few initially Superior students who have less need of these strategies). Some Intermediate-Highs move to Advanced in one semester (45 contact hours); others require two semesters (a second time through the course, which may be repeated once for credit). A very few require still more time, a third time through as an auditor.

A fourth-year course, Advanced Oral Communication, will now be available as a follow-up to the present course. It will be modeled on similar courses taught in English, with a metacommunication focus and a more formal orientation. Within the framework of the advanced conversation course (now to be called Oral Communication) described here, however, many students can achieve Advanced-level proficiency. They need additional reinforcement to maintain it, however. Professors of literature and culture courses need to provide for student participation in the language in class, and the program needs to encourage students to take advantage of using the language. These elements together with the course sequence may then complete the seamless curriculum for which we are striving (La Bouve, 1992) and produce the Advanced-level speaker we need in so many venues.

## The Future

The authors have found the course structure to work well thus far but have found the primary difficulty to lie in the scarcity of communicative materials for such courses, particularly materials organized by functions. Thus the primary changes planned include structuring the materials developed for the course into an appropriate text. We also plan to study and document in more detail student progress throughout the course. In addition, the second advanced communication course will be implemented to focus on Superior-level functions, with the hope of reinforcing advanced-level proficiency and offering some students the chance to move to Advanced-High or Superior on the ACTFL scale. Finally, faculty will work together to try to improve the amount and kind of oral participation by students in all upper-level courses.

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# 6
# Creative Writing in the Secondary Foreign Language Class: A Literary Magazine

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The students of the foreign language classes at Marietta High School in Marietta, Georgia, are producing a literary magazine composed of original poetry and short essays in French, Latin, and Spanish. The current publication is the result of a writing activity which began in the Spanish classes more than five years ago and has developed from a newspaper/ gossip sheet design to its current format. This publication gives the students an opportunity to do something with the language that goes beyond classroom activities, and they have taken great pride in producing original writing for other students and teachers in the Atlanta area to read.

## Background

A look back at the development of this project over the last five years did not reveal a structured set of goals or a planned metamorphosis from a classroom writing assignment to a collection of poems and essays. In reality, neither the current result nor its great success was planned or expected. One of the possible reasons for its having worked is that teacher expectations were not imposed on the students. Its development was based on student aspirations and expectations.

In 1987, the desire to motivate students to use what they were learning in order to communicate with other students in Spanish was the impetus for the initial activity. Since students like to write notes to each other, why not use this as an incentive? The first assignment was for the students in one second-year Spanish class to write a note to a friend in another second-year class. They could write whatever they wanted as long as it was in Spanish. This was an exercise strictly for the experience of writing since it was promised that these notes would not be read by anyone other than the addressee. In order to further motivate the students to write, points were offered if students simply completed the task, and no questions were asked. The next day every student who received a note was asked to respond to it; the same parameters applied. The following assignment was for students to write a letter telling about something that they had done in the past week. This time, however, there were a few changes in how the writing sample was treated. Points still were awarded for completion, but each letter was read by the teacher, and a comment or question to the writer was jotted in the margins. Substantive comments were offered but **not** error corrections. The comments indicated interest in what the students were saying but never suggested that they change anything. The student had to respond to the comment or question. Again, points were given for completion of the task, and there was no attempt to correct errors.

The succeeding step was to ask for a draft of a letter to a friend telling about a sports event, movie, or television program that the writer had seen and liked or disliked. Points were not given for completion of this draft, but errors were corrected by the teacher and a rewrite was required for points. Additional points were offered to those who would allow copies to be made for the class to read. The writing samples were typed, copied, stapled, and read in class.

In the spring of 1988, the project was presented again in an advanced-level class in which third- and fourth-year students were combined. Since most of the students had been involved in this writing activity the previous year, the note writing and letter writing stages were eliminated and a basic "newspaper" was developed. Articles included reviews of news in Latin America; restaurant and movie reviews; a report on a classroom activity; word puzzles; a cartoon; and two poems, one of which was written by the teacher at the students' requests for his participation. The class consisted of a native speaker and several outstanding students, one of whom was the State Star Language Student. All articles were peer edited and printed as

submitted. Although copies were sent to other Spanish classes, this was still an in-school activity, and our students were the only ones to read the product.

Over the summer, it was decided to try to involve other foreign language classes and to turn this creative writing activity into a school-wide effort. An editor was selected--the exceptional student from the previous year who was now studying French in addition to Spanish. The venture was approved by the administration as an official school extracurricular activity, although all work was still being done within the school day either in class or in study hall. The French teacher was very interested in participating, and her classes submitted a variety of articles for the fall and spring editions. Although the length of the booklet increased to between ten and twelve pages and the general overall quality of the articles improved significantly, the format remained essentially the same. One possible reason for the improvement in quality was that the students knew that other students and teachers would read it. In an effort to emphasize that the publication now was multilingual, the students decided to drop the name *La Prensa*, because it was singularly Spanish. The decision also was made to call it a magazine rather than a newspaper.

The participation of Latin students was welcomed in 1989, and the editorial staff was expanded to include an assistant editor for each language. The multilingual magazine idea was good, but the magazine needed a name. This caused the students to search for a title that would incorporate all three participating languages. They selected *Paparazzi*. Although the first issue in the fall was a rather slim, the second effort in the spring was very good. The Latin, French, and Spanish clubs each contributed $25.00 toward the expense of producing enough issues for all second- and third-year students as well as for postage for sending copies to various colleagues and friends. A higher grade of colored paper was purchased for the cover, but the body of the magazine was copied on the school copier using school paper. The students in the Special Education class assembled the booklets.

Spring 1991 was a definite turning point. The editorial staff consisted of five top students who decided that they were not pleased with the first issue, and they voted to limit the second issue to poetry and essays. They also decided to publish it without the title *Paparazzi*. The booklet was offered simply as a "Publication By The Foreign Language Students." The poetry and essay format continued to be the focus of the fall 1991 issue,

and the title *Paparazzi: A Literary Magazine* was chosen. The issue in the spring of 1992 was outstanding. For the first time students selected a theme: Earth Day. Although submissions were not limited to this theme, it provided a starting point for those students who were looking for an idea. Selections from this issue are included in the Appendix.

The concept for 1992-93 has changed slightly. There is now an editor and a staff of twenty-one. Anyone who wanted to work on the publication was accepted on the staff. Although the writing sessions are still conducted during class time, the staff meetings are after school, and for the first time, the school budget includes the cost of materials as a line item.

## Teacher Involvement

Teacher involvement in this creative writing project has always been an area of concern. Faculty contributions during the writing stages are limited to brainstorming sessions to develop ideas and themes as well as suggestions concerning syntax, form, and lexical selection. Until the copies of the magazine began to go outside the foreign language classroom, error correction was not a big concern. Since the act of writing itself and communication through writing were the primary goals of the student texts, errors were overlooked to a great extent. Now, however, error correction is not only necessary but important to both the teachers and the students. There are consistently native speakers in the Spanish classes, and although their spelling is often inaccurate, they contribute some degree of syntactic and lexical control. Peer editing, therefore, produces a fairly manageable piece of writing prior to teacher correction. Since the prevailing opinion is that too much teacher involvement takes ownership away from the students, student editors make all decisions and changes until the final draft. At this time faculty advisors make any grammatical or syntactic changes that are significant, with any structural or lexical changes being made solely as suggestions. When the students begin to feel that they are losing proprietorship, the faculty become less intrusive. Each student understands that submitting a piece of writing does not guarantee publication and that the faculty advisor and the editor make the final decisions. Occasionally the student prefers to forego publication rather than make the recommended changes.

## Problems, Concerns, and Projections

There have been no real problems throughout the magazine's five-year history primarily because its development has been student-directed. There are, however, several current concerns. It is difficult to generate interest sufficient to produce enough material for two issues per year. One issue usually contains more articles and the quality is often superior to the other issue. Since the students themselves are a controlling force in the endeavor, the characteristics of the student population in any one year affect the quality of the magazine. More than half of the students in this year's advanced Spanish class are male and their interests lie in areas other than poetry. The material submitted so far from this class has been less sophisticated than in past years. The earlier newspaper format would have involved more students since it would have corresponded more closely with both the interests and the textual production of the current population. Since student involvement is the primary objective in this creative writing activity, this will be a consideration if the trend continues or if student interest begins to wane.

Because student involvement and learning are the objectives of any activity, it may be necessary to make changes to accommodate as many students as possible. The activity could be divided into two separate but related projects. A monthly newsletter with movie and restaurant reviews, club news, sports reports, and similar features would involve more of the first- and second-year students as well as those advanced students who would like to write and who are not inclined to contribute to the more literary format. Original writings could be channeled into an annual publication that would follow the current format. This idea has been discussed with the current editorial staff. They have all expressed a desire to produce only one issue per year, but they are not interested in returning to the newspaper format.

Plans for the future call for several changes. In 1993-94, it is intended to consolidate the two current proposed issues into one edition for spring publication and to move beyond the put-together product of the xerox machine. It is hoped that these changes will improve both the quality of material and the appearance of the end product. Marietta High School has a nationally-recognized graphic arts program. The annual literary magazine produced by the students of the English creative writing classes is printed by the graphics arts students. We anticipate this same type of

publication as a joint effort of the Foreign Language and the Graphic Arts departments. The cost, of course, will exceed the current budget allowance, but it is hoped that one more year of producing a quality product will support the additional expenditure.

This project has several beneficial results. The students have a reason to write, and a real audience for their opinions and ideas. They feel that their creative writing is an activity that sets them apart from other schools, and this produces school pride. We, the faculty, feel that these writing activities have improved the both the writing process and product.

Writing has become a somewhat less-dreaded activity. The students see writing as an opportunity to express their opinions and feelings. The teachers in the special education program are constantly looking for tasks that their students can do successfully, and their students feel that they are a part of this project because they assemble the magazine. Finally we, the teachers of the Foreign Language Department, are happy that the students see that using a foreign language for communication is not just for native speakers in some far away country.

**Appendix**

The selections below were chosen on the basis of originality of content and style as well as the amount of faculty involvement and correction required. Two of the Latin poems were written by first-year students. The poem «Le Chiffonnier» was written by a second-year student who did not excel in the regular classroom environment.

Editor's Note: The samples of student writing that follow are reproduced as submitted, with no additional editing.

**El Mundo**

Flores bonitas
Árboles verdes
Cielo azul
Mundo extraordinario
Hombre

Flores muertos
Árboles enfermos
Cielo sucio
Mundo destruido

Emily Ritzler

**L'Arrivée Tranquille**
Permettez l'air couler
Brise, venez dans mon chemin
Silence et paix
Sois avec moi maintenant
Esprit d'errant
Laissez errer
Soleil brillant, descendez
Laissez le chaleur tomber
Sur mon visage
Il n'y a rien à voir
C'est plutôt un sentiment.
Jennifer Roan

**La Selva Tropical**
Las gotas de lluvia estallan al sol con rayos de arco iris.
Las mariposas ciegan con las bellezas de colores.
Los sonidos salvajes viajan intensificando por las espesuras verdes.
Pero las tonadas gloriosas no se oirán más.
Ni se ven volando los maravillosos colores.
¿Cómo se escapó este paraíso?
Katherine George

**Selva**
A lo lejos de las luces urbanas
por las espesuras
parasoles cubren los cuerpos centelleos
envueltos
tratando de soltarse
al fin viendo
el puesto del sol brillante
mientras que los maravillosos cuerpos nuevos
se escapen
corren hacia el nuevo mundo
dejando ser compartida su vida
por un mundo que ya no conocen.
Asha Patel

**Le Chiffonnier**
J'ai froid
J'ai faim
Je n'ai pas de maison
Il fait mauvais
J'ai peu de vêtements pour porter
Je n'ai pas vu mon propre visage depuis 5 ans
Très malodorant et crasseux
Un charrette est mon valise
Bon Dieu s'il te plaît aide-moi
Il n'y a pas d'abri pour moi
Il n'y a pas de foyer
Il n'y a rien

Laura Lea

**Recuerdo a California**
Voy al mar para reunirme con los gigantes azules de sombreros blancos.
Sus grandes brazos atacan la playa con mucha violencia.
Los oigo, el trueno de su enojo en mis oído.
Veo un cielo de oro.
Toco la arena con mis pies desnudos.
Camino solo.
La plancha es el único amigo mío.
No hay nadie en la playa hoy.
Todo el mundo ha olvidado la belleza.
No oyen la música.
No ven la admiración.
Son muertos a la naturaleza.
Pero no lo he olvidado.
Siempre lo recordaré.

Parker Smathers

**Me pregunto**
Me pregunto ¿qué harían los ricos
si tuvieran qué vivir en la calle?
Me pregunto ¿qué harían los convictos
si fueran robados de todas sus posesiones?
Me pregunto ¿qué harían los asesinos
si fueran asesinados a sus hijos?

Me pregunto ¿qué harían los políticos
si alguien les mintiera?
Me pregunto ¿qué harían los censuradores
si no pudieran leer lo que querían?
Me pregunto ¿qué harían los corrompedores
si fuera contaminada su agua?
Me pregunto ¿qué tendrá que hacer la próxima generación
para sobrevivir?

Heidi Krupp

**L'aube de Printemps**
Les fleurs dans le prairie balancent dans le vent
Le vent souffle doucement et parfume les champs
Les petits oiseaux s'élèvent au-dessus de la prairie
Les abeiles bourdonnent dans le vent
Le matin le soleil fait chaud, mais
Le soir la lune monte
La nuit tombe et il y a toujours un souvenir d'hiver
Le printemps attend un autre matin.

Tracy Butler

**Pulchra Terra**
Ab mari ad mare
Ab terr ad terram
Tu certe non potes
Nostrum consilium del re
Pulchrae terrae.

David Chambless, Catherine Milligan, and
Michelle Burns

**Terra est nobis defendere**
Nihilum neglegemus
Maria complentur piscibus et mammalibus
Et in terra sunt animalia obsoleta
Silvae cremae sunt
Ut negotia fiant aerari sona
Nobis adjuvanda et ponenda sunt
Ut nostra terra potest servari.

Wendy Cape, Raquel Terrel, and Kenny Hutchins

**Noster Locus Perfectionis**

Orbis terrarum est expletus pulchrorum florum, arborum, et fluentum fluminium. Hi paradisi sunt loci ubi homines eveniant ex festinatione quotidianae vitae. Cum homo proveniat ad hos portus, cognoscat vere amoenitatem orbis terrarum in quo habitat. Ut continuamus frui donis quae orbis terrarum suppeditat pro nos, necesse est nobis conari esse "boni procuratores," curando orbe terrarum.

Chelsea Smith and Kelly Kovach

# 7

# Learning Styles and the At-Risk Foreign Language Student

**Jeanne Jendrzejewski**
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**Louisiana State University Laboratory School**

In recent years, educational experts have focused much of their research efforts on how to reach and teach the at-risk student effectively. At-risk students in the foreign language class are those who struggle daily to keep up with their second language course, and who eventually drop out after the two years usually required for high school graduation or college/university entrance. Indeed, as more and more colleges and universities are reinstituting foreign language study as a requirement for graduation, some university students, too, will struggle again through the foreign language requirements and drop out after the minimum number of course or credit hours.

Many factors may put the foreign language student at risk. Some of these students may be of low ability. Others may simply be uninterested in second language learning. Low self-esteem can make it difficult for some students to venture into self-expression in the new language. Some of these students and many others, perhaps a majority of second language students, may be suffering because of a mismatch of their individual learning style with the teaching style of the instructor. Particularly for students of lower ability, the additional hurdle of mismatched styles of learning/teaching may be disastrous. For all students, matching learning styles with appropriate teaching styles can make the difference between

struggle and pleasure in foreign language learning, and between dropping out and staying in.

From the teacher's point of view, it is imperative to recognize at the beginning of the school year which students may be at risk. Some characteristics of an at-risk student may be the following:

1. During class, the student is reading, doodling, or staring out the window.
2. When called upon, the student stalls, hoping the teacher will call on someone else.
3. The student often speaks very softly when answering, because he/she is unsure of his/her response.
4. The student has his/her text closed for most of the class time, and seldom knows what page the class is on. He/she may often not bring his/her text to class.
5. The student appears to be listening, and yet consistently performs below average on written tests.

Research shows the importance of matching teaching and learning styles. Marshall (1988) states that this match is critical for students who do not learn easily or typically, and it is important for supporting the natural differences among all students. Martini's research with seventh graders shows that auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners all achieved significantly higher science test scores when science concepts were introduced through their perceptual preferences. While most of the research in matching teaching style with learning style has been conducted with children in elementary and middle school, results have consistently shown this match and multi-modality teaching to produce higher rates of achievement and retention of knowledge (Jarsonbeck, 1984; Dunn, Bruno, and Gardiner, 1984). Sparks and Ganschow (1991), in their work with university-level foreign language students, have speculated that affective differences such as high levels of anxiety, poor attitude toward learning a foreign language, and seemingly low motivation, may be caused by the student's linguistic coding problems.

Pouwels (391) states that "If the modal strengths and weaknesses of beginning foreign language students could be diagnosed, the language learning potential of the more unimodal student might be developed." Further, in his experiment involving 79 first semester Spanish students at the University of Central Arkansas, Pouwels found that half of the students

who ranked as dominantly auditory on the learning styles test used in the study had not identified themselves as auditory learners on a self-reporting inventory. It seems then, that many students could benefit from help in identifying their learning style.

McGehee and Jendrzejewski, since 1984, have matched learning styles to teaching styles in their second language classes, and have seen a decline in the number of second language dropouts (Harris-McGehee and Jendrzejewski, 1984). They have based their test for determining learning style preferences on the work of Bandler and Grinder (1979).

Every person has a preferred sense for learning and retrieving information: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic (Bandler and Grinder, 1979). In addition, every person has a preferred hemispheric orientation: left brain or right brain. These factors determine how the learner perceives input, and how he/she processes and stores information (Bandler and Grinder, 1979). If learning is optimized when the learner can function in his/her preferred mode, teaching must be adapted to address these modes.

Discerning a student's particular learning style enables the teacher and student to work together to teach and learn most effectively. At the Louisiana State University Laboratory School, Jendrzejewski and McGehee have developed a five-step process using the visual access cue tests detailed by Bandler and Grinder (1979) to determine the preferred learning mode of students who demonstrate early in the school year that they may be at risk (McGehee and Jendrzejewski, 1984). It is necessary to state at this point that the interviews in these tests must be conducted individually. Each interview takes about twenty minutes. Because no teacher has the time to conduct such interviews for all students, it is suggested that the teacher search for time to test only those students determined to be at risk. At the Laboratory School, these five-step interviews are conducted during the lunch period or after school.

Learning mode preferences are revealed in minute movements of the eyes as an individual processes or retrieves information. While there is an eye movement pattern common to most people (i.e., for most "normally-organized right-handed people," glancing down and to their right as they incorporate new material into their body of knowledge or as they retrieve information to use indicates that the information is being stored and retrieved through kinesthetic sequences), the first step in the process developed by Jendrzejewski and McGehee is to determine the student's individual pattern of visual accessing cues.

The learning mode preference test consists of asking the student a series of questions in English for each learning mode, while recording the observed eye movements on a chart. The questions are designed to require the student to carry out only one mental operation. For example, one would ask "Can you hear..." rather than "Imagine you are listening to...." The resulting chart shows, for that individual, which eye movements correspond to visual memory, visual construct, auditory memory, auditory construct, and kinesthetic functions. The chart will also reveal in which modes the individual accesses directly or indirectly, and whether there are any modes he/she does not use at all. (See Appendix.)

The second step is to ask questions in the second language which require the student to use the specific skills--listening, speaking, reading, writing--and knowledge (i.e., culture) required in the second language class. For this step as in the first one, the teacher and student sit looking directly at each other, and the teacher again records the eye movements of the student as he/she responds to the questions. From this testing, the teacher determines the patterns or "paths" the student uses to perform specific language tasks, particularly those that require the use of modalities other than the student's preferred mode.

The third step is to determine whether the student is using appropriate study techniques by asking the student how he/she currently prepares specific assignments. By listening to the student's responses and again recording his/her eye movements while talking, the teacher can determine whether the student's study techniques match his/her preferred learning mode, and how the teacher can help the student make his/her study effort more successful. Interestingly, the teacher will discover whether or not the student actually studies for the class: there is an eye movement pattern that the student will use when making up an answer!

The fourth step is to recommend specific study techniques that call for the student's preferred learning mode and that strengthen the transfer use of other learning modes. It is further recommended that the student use the new study skills daily in preparation for class, whether or not specific homework has been assigned for a particular night. The teacher does not give individual homework assignments within the class; instead, each student learns how to maximize learning by his/her approach to the learning task assigned to the class as a whole.

In the fifth step, the teacher, who is now aware of the specific learning needs of his/her students, incorporates more and more types of teaching/

learning activities into the second language class. The result is better teaching: the use of a variety of techniques that involve the students in the teaching/learning process. Additionally, the teacher follows up with individual students by verifying in the moments between classes that the student is still studying nightly, by answering questions the student may have from the previous night's study, etc. If the student is not making the desired progress, the teacher may make an appointment to meet the student after school or at lunchtime to adjust his/her study prescriptions as needed.

## Now That We Know All This, What Do We Do With It?

Presenting lessons in the various learning styles requires that the teacher adapt the class format to meet the needs of all of the students. Instead of rows of chairs and desks, a semicircle or a circle may be appropriate. Students may be grouped in fours or in pairs for small-group work, cooperative work, or peer teaching. Class may even be held outside of the classroom at times. It is important to find a balance in class format, thereby providing the most comfort in varied situations.

Since auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners will be present in the foreign language class, lessons need to be directed toward these three learning styles. All students will find their learning enhanced by a multisensory approach. Any language lesson content may be presented auditorially, visually, and kinesthetically. Visual presentations and practice may include using the chalkboard and multi-colored chalk, charts, posters, television, overhead projectors, books, magazines, picture diagrams, images, flash cards, bulletin board displays, films, slides or videos: visual learners need to see what they are to learn. They must be shown rather than told what to do. Color highlighting of the text and study sheets and educational software for the computer enable the visual student to learn more efficiently. Lest the teacher think that there is never enough time to prepare those visuals, Dickel and Slak (1983) found that visual aids generated by students are even more effective that ready-made ones.

Auditory presentations and practice may include stating aloud the requirements of the lesson, oral questions and answers, paired or group work on a progression of oral exercises ranging from repetition to communication using the language function or form under study. Students may listen to tapes, CDs, dialogues and role-playing. Jingles, catchy stories, memory/rhyming devices, or songs are good learning aids. Allowing the student to spell or recite words and phrases on tape, then

playing back the tape and listening to him/herself also allows the student to practice in his/her strongest mode.

Kinesthetic presentations require the students to use manipulatives, chart materials, gestures, signals, typing, songs, games, role-playing: activities that involve meaningful motion. The students then become involved as active participants in the learning process.

Following is an example of a multisensory presentation on direct and indirect object pronouns. As the teacher begins an oral presentation on the form and placement of direct and indirect object pronouns, he/she simultaneously shows the written forms on transparencies with the object nouns and their replacement pronouns shown in color. As students begin to respond to simple questions using object pronouns in their responses, the teacher hands those students cards with the colors that match the pronoun required in the response.

Next, the students hear the pronoun patterns on tape, and hold up the appropriate card to indicate that they heard a direct object pronoun or an indirect object pronoun, or if they heard the object pronoun in a statement or a command. The students listen again to the tape exercise and repeat the phrases and sentences. A taped dialogue follows, exposing the students to the sound of the new pattern a number of times. The students write from dictation several sentences containing the new patterns.

For additional kinesthetic input, members of the class come to the front of the room, each holding a card with a word or phrase to make up a sentence. On the cards for the direct or indirect objects in the sentence, the noun marker and noun are written on one side of the card, and the object pronoun is written on the reverse side. As the teacher calls out the sentence, the students move into position to form a correct phrase. When the teacher changes the sentence to use the object pronouns instead of noun objects, the students rearrange themselves to again form grammatically correct sentences.

Writing practice includes exercises beginning with the simple substitution of object pronouns for noun objects and progresses through short guided compositions. Students may work in pairs or in small groups in order to reinforce learning and to help each other correct written work. Finally, role playing with tangible objects enables the students to "feel" the pronouns' positions in sentences.

Appropriate language practice includes activities that facilitate transfer from one learning mode to another. Pairs and small groups are the perfect setting to maximize the opportunity for language practice for all of

the students during the class hour. Consciously creating appropriate variety in the classroom then helps meet the specific learning needs of the students while simultaneously enhancing pleasure in learning through variety and interest.

## Helping Students Cross Learning-Style Borders

Since in our courses, for example, we require late-day-visual-learners-with-left-hemisphere-preference to learn to understand the spoken language while engaging in culturally correct communication with kinesthetic-right-hemisphere-early-morning people, part of the assistance we must give our students is helping them learn crossover skills--how to transfer from visual preference to kinesthetic communication, how to transfer from auditory preference to a writing assignment, for example, a letter to a real or imaginary pen pal. In principle, here is what happens: Visual students hear an assignment of an oral exercise, and **visualize** the assignment, as well as what they must do. Next, they see themselves carrying out the assignment, in effect **watching** as if there were a movie going on in their head. Only with the movie running in their head can they also **hear** themselves saying the right things. Thus this assignment will be much easier for visual learners who have been taught to use this process, if they have not already figured it out for themselves.

As a second example, auditory students who are learning spelling, written forms in grammar, or other normally visual material, may need to be told to start from their strongest learning mode, the auditory system. For example: Read the item/passage/dialogue/exercise aloud, then spell aloud and in writing while looking at the words (to initiate transfer from auditory to visual). Another technique for these students would be to read the material to be learned into a cassette recorder, then listen to their own tape of the material while following along in the book, or write, as appropriate. Finally, they should double check what they have written by looking at their written work while making the corrections orally and with pencil. Similarly appropriate prescriptions can be given to students who have shown a strong preference for visual learning, for auditory learning, or for kinesthetic learning. Follow-up between teacher and students will allow these prescriptions to be changed as needed.

Encouraging students to involve their families in foreign language learning and providing vehicles for that interaction can make an important contribution to the students' self-esteem while reinforcing learning for them. Depending on the type of task, students may be reinforcing visual,

auditory, and/or kinesthetic modes. Taylor (1983) and Rangel (1990) both found that family involvement in learning and family support and pride in their student's accomplishments were critical elements in the student's language and literacy development. Requiring students to teach their parent(s) five words or expressions before PTA meeting night, requiring students to label in the foreign language 10 (or more) appropriate items in their home during a unit of study, homework assignments that require the students to interview their parent(s) in English and write the interview responses in the foreign language, requiring the students to call a classmate or the teacher to complete an activity by telephone are ways of allowing the students to gracefully show off their budding language abilities while practicing the language.

It is important to note here that teaching students to maximize their study does not require that the teacher give each student an individual assignment. It does require that each student who needs it be taught how to prepare the assignment using his/her own talents and strengths. This communication between teacher and student, combined with teaching techniques which reinforce learning in all modes can only reduce the frustration felt by the at-risk students in our language classes.

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## Appendix

### Process Used to Determine a Student's Visual Access Cue Pattern

The teacher and student sit facing each other, so that the teacher can directly observe the student's eyes as he/she answers a series of questions.

The teacher asks a series of questions requiring the student (1) to call up visual memories, (2) to construct visual images, (3) to call up auditory experiences, (4) to create auditory experiences, (5) to call up kinesthetic experiences. In creating each list of questions, the teacher must be sure to not use words which require the student to do more than one operation.

*Sample questions*

1. To call up visual memories.
   a. What color are your mother's eyes?
   b. Are her eyes darker or lighter than yours?
   c. What shape are the letters on the outside of this building?

2 To construct visual images.
   a. How would you look with green hair?
   b. How would you look playing a tuba?
   c. How would your school look with awnings on the windows?

3. To call up auditory experiences.
   a. What is your favorite kind of music?
   b. Which door in your house sounds the loudest when it is slammed?
   c. What is the last thing your mother said to you this morning?

4. To create auditory experiences.
   a. Hear yourself singing "The Star-Spangled Banner."
   b. Hear someone you are close to saying your name in a delightful way.
   c. Hear your best friend congratulating you on doing something special.

5. To call up kinesthetic experiences.
   a. What does cat fur feel like?
   b. How do you feel swimming in cold water?
   c. How do you feel in bright sunlight?

The teacher marks small arrows to indicate the eye movements the student exhibits in answering each question: up and left, up and right, straight to left, straight to right, lower right, lower left. If the student's eyes make more than one movement, mark the arrows in the order in which the movements were made: the student may be strongly unimodal and be compensating by accessing first in his/her lead mode, and then transferring to the mode requested. If no eye movements are noticed, make the questions more difficult, for example, for visual memory, "What color shoes was your mother wearing the last time you saw her?" If your student seems not to use one or more of the modes, double check the list of questions to verify that each question truly asks for the targeted mode. If

the questions are appropriate, it is probable that the student does not directly use that particular mode.

*Sample responses*

| Question | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1. a. ↗ | 3. a. → | 5. a. ↙ |
| | 1. b. ↗ | 3. b. → | 5. b. ↙ |
| | 1. c. ↗ | 3. c. → | 5. c. ↙↗↙ |
| | 2. a. ↖ | 4. a. ← | |
| | 2. b. ↖ | 4. b. ← | |
| | 2. c. ↖ | 4. c. ↗← | |

**Process Used to Determine Student's Preferred Learning Mode**

The teacher and student sit facing each other so that the teacher again can observe the student's eyes as he/she responds to questions.

The teacher asks a series of questions in the second language requiring the student to perform various second language tasks. The teacher marks small arrows to indicate the student's eye movements as the student responds to the questions. As before, if the student make a series of eye movements in responding, the teacher marks all of them in order. For example, in response to "How do you spell _____?", the student may 1) give his/her visual memory cue pattern to look at the word in his/her head before spelling it, 2) give his/her auditory memory cue pattern to sound the word out in his/her head before spelling it, or 3) give both visual access cue patterns, from which the observer may note that the student both saw and heard the word before he/she spelled it aloud.

A second example, when asked to respond to the question in the second language, "How is your mother doing?", a first year student might exhibit first auditory cues as the question is heard, then visual construct cues as question is spelled out in his head, then pass to visual memory as the answeris figured out, and finally back to auditory as the response is ready to be uttered!

It must be remembered that the first step in working with a student is always determine that individual's pattern of visual accessing cues. The visual accessing cues for a "normally organized" right-handed person are diagrammed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**

**$V^c$** Visual constructed images

**$V^r$** Visual remembered (eidetic) images

(Eyes defocused and unmoving also indicates visual accessing)

**$A^c$** Auditory constructed sounds or words

**$A^r$** Auditory remembered sounds or words

**K** Kinesthetic feelings (also smell and taste)

**A** Auditory sounds or words

adapted from Bandler and Grinder, 25

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